MANUEL M. PONCE: A CRITICAL STUDY OF HIS *CONCIERTO ROMÁNTICO* FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA

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The *Concierto Romántico* for Piano and Orchestra is one of Manuel M. Ponce's outstanding compositional accomplishments from his Romantic period, reflecting both the state of Mexican music at the turn of the 20th century, and his early nationalist tendencies. However, it remains the only concerto in Ponce's output in need of a more comprehensive analysis. This treatise focuses on a global investigative that examines descriptive and analytic references to the work, as well as a comparison and clarification of the existing score sources. An analytical and stylistic musical study using conventional theoretical techniques leads to a musicological interpretation of the work's extra-musical meaning, based on close assessments of Ponce's compositional practice and social principles.

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My family—my mother Guadalupe and my brother Canek, for their never-ending love, support and understanding. This document is a result of nine long years of musical endeavors, impossible to realize without their patience, care and encouragement. I dedicate this treatise to them with all my affection.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

"Concierto Romantico" by Manuel Maria Ponce
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Almost sixty years after his death, the compositional output of Manuel M. Ponce faces a process of rediscovery. Today, Ponce's music is heard through the extremely limited spectrum known to the world—some of his richly expressive guitar works and the myriad of different instrumental and vocal arrangements of his famous song *Estrellita*. If perhaps discarding the criticisms of Ponce's 'old fashioned' approaches can lead to a more unbiased perspective on his idiomatic and original works, there can be an improved understanding of the distinct compositional style he embraced: from the poetic nature of the early *Danza del Sarampión* [Smallpox Dance] (composed when he was nine), to the harmonic complexity and stylistic variety found in his Violin Concerto (considered by many to be his masterpiece). The series of influences that embody Ponce's works make it difficult to categorize and catalogue his oeuvre. Despite their compositional diversity, his pieces are embedded with a very individual voice, itself a product of a nurtured musical identity.

Juan Vicente Melo writes about Ponce: "we are before a man that identified an epoch that belongs to us, that reaches us, that hurts us. Before an output—suppressed, disguised, manipulated… An output that has deserved the most dignified silence, in other words, the ultimate homage."[1] While there has been an unquestionable surge of interest in performing and researching Ponce, more work remains to be done if his oeuvre is to achieve the distinction and recognition it truly deserves.

[1] Juan Vicente Melo. "Manuel M. Ponce: Mas allá de las Anécdotas, mas aca de la Realidad Musical" in *México en el Arte*, no. 19 (México D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes- Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1987), 73.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This treatise focuses on an in-depth study of Ponce's piano concerto, also known as the *Concierto Romántico*. This is the only work in Ponce's concerto output that has yet to be researched and analyzed in an extensive manner. The piece was finished in 1910 and belongs to Ponce's first compositional period. Despite the fact that this work was Ponce's first attempt at a large form, the concerto contains a wealth of innovative compositional ideas that deserve to be studied more closely. These include sophisticated processes of thematic transformation, unique form and structural components, and seemingly standard harmonic treatments that lie beneath a complex and ambiguous tonal design. The concerto also offers an array of elements that can be contrasted and compared with Ponce's social beliefs and compositional practice. An understanding of Ponce's musical philosophy can therefore provide valuable insight to the structural, harmonic, and musicological elements that are present in the score. Several Ponce scholars have consistently labeled him as an 'eclectic' composer, and certain works from his later periods easily demonstrate the appearance of this unusual but medullar characteristic in his compositional style. However, it should be noted that even such an early piece like the *Concierto Romántico* contains, within the homogeneity of its 'Romantic' nature, a series of eclectic traits reflective of Ponce's compositional and social principles. This study will unveil in more detail such traits, shedding light on a work of substantial musical interest that nonetheless tends to be overlooked in Ponce's output. The purpose of this thesis will also be to renew scholarly awareness and counteract the apparent elusiveness that has kept this concerto from being researched more in depth.

1.2 State of Research

A considerable amount of research has been done in regard to Ponce's life and compositions.[2] Biographical information is available through a series of sources in Spanish.[3] In terms of scholarly research in journals and articles, the Mexican journal *Heterofonía* [Heterophony] proves to be an invaluable asset. This publication contains abundant information by a series of authors and should be considered the leading investigative tool for Ponce research.[4]

Although Ponce's own writings and personal views, expressed in journals like *Revista Musical de México* [Musical Magazine of Mexico], *Cultura Musical* [Musical Culture] and *Gaceta Musical* [Musical Gazette] have not been directly consulted, there are innumerable references and personal quotes from these publications in many of the sources used for the creation of this treatise. Therefore, it is the author's opinion that Ponce's views can be conveyed satisfactorily and without compromise through the indirect use of the above named sources.

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[2] Theses and dissertations include David J. Nystel's *Harmonic Practice in the Guitar Music of Manuel M. Ponce* (Master of Arts thesis, North Texas State University, 1985), Jorge Barrón Corvera's *Three violin works by Mexican composer Manuel María Ponce (1882-1948): Analysis and performance* (Doctor of Musical Arts Dissertation- University of Texas- Austin, 1994), Rodrigo Herrera's *The chronology, list of works, and nationalist ideology of Manuel M. Ponce* (Master of Music thesis- University of Texas- Austin, 1997), and Dahlia Ann Guerra's *Manuel M. Ponce: A study of his solo piano works and his relationship to Mexican musical Nationalism* (Doctor of Musical Arts Dissertation- University of Oklahoma, 1997).

[3] References include Ricardo Miranda's *Manuel M. Ponce: Ensayo sobre su vida y obra.* [Manuel M. Ponce: Essay on his life and Work] (México D.F.: CONACULTA, 1998), Pablo Castellanos' *Manuel M. Ponce: Ensayo* [Manuel M. Ponce: Essay] (México D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Difusión Cultural, Unidad Editorial, 1982) and David López Alonso's two books entitled *Manuel M. Ponce* (México D.F.: Ediciones Botas, 1971) and *Manuel M. Ponce: Ensayo Biográfico* [Manuel M. Ponce: Biographical Essay] (México D.F.: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1950). Significant research has also been conducted by Yolanda Moreno Rivas who provides a substantial amount of information about Ponce in her books *La composición en México en el Siglo XX* [Composition in Twentieth Century Mexico] (México D.F.: CONACULTA, 1994) and *Rostros del nacionalismo en la música mexicana: Un ensayo de interpretación* [Faces of Nationalism in Mexican Music: An Interpretative Essay] (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989). Entries about Ponce also appear in musical dictionaries like *Compositores Mexicanos* [Mexican Composers] by Juan Álvarez Coral (México D.F.: Editores Asociados, 1981), and Simón Tapia Colman's *Música y Músicos en México* [Music and Musicians in Mexico] (México D.F.: Panorama Editorial, 1991).

[4] Other journals like *Pauta- Cuadernos de teoría y crítica musical* [Pauta- Notebooks of theory and musical critique] and *México en el Arte* [Mexico in the Arts] have also been considered for this study.

1.3 Related Literature

Several references discuss the development of Mexican Music in the 19th century, and the rise of Mexican musical nationalism, essential factors to understand the political and social context in which Ponce was composing.[5] There are also a series of informative sources in English which offer a more general approach about Mexican music.[6]

1.4 Need for Research

Although there are a vast amount of writings about Ponce and his music, very little research has been conducted in regard to his piano concerto, the *Concierto Romántico*. This is probably directly linked to the fact that a printed edition has not been made available for purchase yet, a setback that has obviously prevented many people from accessing the score. Throughout the literature studied, a considerable number of references are made about the concerto, but only one resource in particular deals specifically with analytical research. This is an article in the Mexican journal *Heterofonía* written by CENIDIM (Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información Musical "Carlos Chávez") [Nacional Center of Investigation, Documentation and Musical Information “Carlos Chávez”] researcher Joel Almazán Orihuela. In his article, Almazán

[5] These include three sources by well known Spanish author Otto Mayer-Serra, a respected authority on scholar musical writing in Mexico: *Panorama de la música mexicana desde la Independencia hasta la actualidad* [Overview of Mexican music since the Independence to present time] (México D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1941), *The Present State of Music in Mexico* (Washington, D.C.: General Secretariat of Organization of American States, 1946) - an English translation by Frank Jellinek from the original in Spanish, and *Música y Músicos de Latinoamérica* [Music and Musicians in Latin America] (México D.F.: Editorial Atlante, 1947). Also noteworthy is Pedro Michaca’s *El Nacionalismo Musical Mexicano* [Mexican Musical Nationalism] (México D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Sección Editorial, 1931).

[6] These include theses and dissertations like Iris Kaphan’s *Change in cultural context and musical style: a connective process formulated and applied to the Mexican Revolution and Mexican music* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California- Los Angeles, 1978), and Dan Malmström’s *Introduction to Twentieth Century Mexican Music* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Uppsala University [Sweden], 1974). Other well-known resources about Mexican music are comprised of Gerard Behague’s *Music in Latin America: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979), Nicholas Slonimsky’s *Music of Latin America* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), and *Robert Stevenson’s Music in Mexico: A Historical Survey* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1952).

utilizes Schenkerian analysis principles and Arnold Schoenberg's *developing variation* theory to distill the thematic elements of the concerto. However, as Almazán himself recognizes, his work does not encompass "a global analysis that considers the diverse elements that form part of this genius score."[7] Thus, this study attempts to describe in more detail the compositional occurrences of the work and their surrounding philosophical background.

1.5 Treatment

The main objective of this treatise is to provide an in-depth analysis of the form and the harmonic implications of the work using standard techniques. A close study of the concerto's compositional and social background and the stylistic models used by Ponce are also examined. Finally, an encompassing analysis of these elements offers conclusions in regard to the concepts of compositional and social homogeneity and eclecticism, as they relate to Ponce's style and ideology. This involves a diverse view of the way that Ponce combined traditional harmonic treatment and pre-established forms from the Romantic Period into his work, while also incorporating and merging a series of European and Mexican stylistic traits into the concerto. Another chapter offers solutions dealing with the inconsistencies found within the three different score sources.

1.6 Outline of the Study

The second chapter of this study serves as an introduction to Mexican music in the 19th century and the rise of Mexican musical nationalism. Ponce's compositional development in relation to this rising trend is discussed, and brief biographical information is provided.

[7] Joel Almazán Orihuela. "Integración temática en el concierto para piano de Manuel M. Ponce" in *Heterofonía* no.118-119. (México D.F.: CENIDIM, 1998) 118.

The third chapter offers introductory information about the *Concierto Romántico*. Ponce's concerto production is more closely examined. In terms of the piano concerto, there is a discussion of the piece's compositional background and an overview of the references found in the existing Ponce literature. The concerto's performance history during Ponce's lifetime is reviewed. Finally, the concerto's place in Mexican piano concerto literature is analyzed more closely. This leads to a list of the existing discography of the *Concierto Romántico*, provided as an appendix to this study.

The fourth chapter is devoted to a comparison of the available scores of this composition. This is inclusive of an assessment of the disparities found between the printed edition and the manuscripts used. Solutions for misprints and inaccuracies are offered. Interpretative suggestions by the author of this treatise are presented. Examples of further errors in the printed score are appended to this thesis.

The fifth chapter consists of an analytical study of the concerto. Stylistic models used by Ponce are examined and compared. This is followed by a descriptive overview of the concerto, focusing in-depth on the form and basic structural elements. This is further complemented by an analysis of the different key areas and how these function in the overall tonal plan of the composition. A discussion of Ponce's harmonic treatment and practice is also considered.

The sixth chapter deals with Ponce's compositional philosophy and social principles, understood through an overview of the socio-historic context of pre-revolutionary Mexico (1876-1910). Their direct application in the *Concierto Romántico* leads to a sociological interpretation of the work, which is complemented by the musical findings described in Chapter 5.

The seventh chapter, a conclusion, explores the results found in terms of form, harmonic and stylistic analysis, and how these integrate to the concepts of compositional

and social homogeneity and eclecticism in the *Concierto Romántico*. A revisit to Ponce's musical philosophy leads to a discussion of its effects in the composition of the concerto.

CHAPTER 2

MANUEL M. PONCE'S COMPOSITIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE RISE OF MEXICAN MUSICAL NATIONALISM

2.1 Music in 19th Century Mexico and the Rise of Mexican Musical Nationalism

The compositional philosophy and style developed by Manuel M. Ponce can be directly linked to the evolutionary state of late 19th century Mexican music, society, and culture. Ponce's output and the pioneering role he played in the country's musical heritage as the first truly nationalist composer can be better understood through an awareness of the historical context that led to his compositional and social development. Thus, the inclusion of a brief overview of 19th century Mexican music, and the impending rise of Mexican musical nationalism merits further study in this treatise.

The Colonial period following the Spanish Conquest of Mexico (1521-1810) was musically characterized by total ecclesiastical control, which limited the potential development of Mexican music and musicians. This was further complemented by a poor cultivation of musical traditions, mainly as a result of the Colonial government's need to prioritize social and economic development over culture. As such, musicians of the Colonial era lacked basic musical knowledge, making compositional success difficult to achieve.[1]

The end of the Colonial period was marked by both decay in musical quality and technical setbacks, resulting from the marked cultural excisions and political crises that

[1] Yolanda Moreno Rivas. *Rostros del nacionalismo en la música mexicana: Un ensayo de interpretación* (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989), 35.

arose from the Mexican Independence.[2] The lack of musical evolution was primarily due to the inexistence of autochthonous musical traditions, strongly suppressed during the Colonial period and replaced with the musical practices of Spanish missionaries. As such, there was no sense of evolutionary continuity, an essential factor for compositional progress.[3]

Musical appreciation was further compromised by the lack of educators and students, leaving the field in the hands of amateurs and aficionados. This factor was transcendental in the deficient musical development observed during the first half of the 19th century, where composers "were unable to achieve immediate psychological, formal, and expressive evolution, in addition to appropriate craftsmanship that would allow them to create a sonata, symphony, or concerto."[4] This was paired with the rising importance of the piano industry, leading to the emergence of salon piano music as the main musical genre of the time. Fostering this trend was a causal for the misunderstanding of pure instrumental music, and the observance of concerts as acrobatic exhibitions of mere technical virtuosity that as such were accessible to the public.[5]

Mexican composers, without the essential prior cultivation of a national musical treasury, were forced to look upon limited examples of European models, making an unconventional transition into the Romantic trends of that time. The main problem associated with the musical works of this era is their lack of modernization, seen primarily through the basic harmonic treatment and the sparse feeling of tension contained within them. The promotion of salon music subsequently led to the rarefied nurturing of this genre in concerts, creating a disassociation of true Art music which

[2] Ibid., 18.
[3] Otto Mayer-Serra. *Panorama de la música mexicana desde la Independencia hasta la actualidad* (México D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1941), 25.
[4] Ibid., 60.
[5] Ibid., 34.

prevented a consequent establishment of symphonic concerts. Recitals were generally given by international musicians, which accounted for the seldom rise of national performing figures.[6] The precarious situation of Mexican music led to the adoption of another foreign genre during the second half of the 19th century: Italian opera. The success of composers like Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and later Verdi, had resulted in standardized and commercialized success worldwide, and Mexico was not the exception.[7] The main promoters of this genre were composers Melesio Morales (1838-1908) and Aniceto Ortega (1825-1875), whose opera *Guatimotzin*, based on the story of the last Aztec prince, can be seen as one of the first musical examples to incorporate a national subject, although the musical treatment was still based on European Romantic traditions. While Ortega's work can be seen as the most representative example of Romanticism in Mexico, his operas and those of Morales are not transcendental in Mexican musical history, primarily because they are seen as merely competent imitations of their Italian counterparts. A reason for the poor compositional training of these authors might be due to the fact that an official institution of musical education did not exist until 1877.[8] The public concert, which had flourished in Europe in the 1840s, did not begin forming part of Mexican cultural life until the last decade of the century. This coincided with the incorporation of more serious musical repertoire into the concert hall.

Along with the continued presence of salon music, a generation of composer pianists like Felipe Villanueva (1862-1893), Ernesto Elorduy (1853-1913), and Julio Ituarte (1845-1905) set the aristocratic musical standards for generations to come. Worthy of mention is the unusual work *Ecos de México*, by Ituarte. This piano potpourri is based on the incorporation of several Mexican folk-songs which are molded into a virtuoso-style format. This is one of very few 19th century examples to not only include

[6] Ibid., 35.
[7] Ibid., 46.
[8] Ibid., 38.

traditional elements into a work of Art music, but to also make them an essential component of the overall composition.

The generation that followed was composed of two major figures, Gustavo Campa (1863-1934) and Ricardo Castro (1864-1907). While their compositional style was still largely rooted in the European tradition, their musical achievements and the increased technical skills of these composers demonstrate advancement in Mexican music. There was also a shift in influential tendencies as the Italian hegemony over Mexican composers gave way to the procedures found in German and French music.[9] Castro, following the slight trends initiated by works like that of Ituarte, can be credited for the creation of yet another opera with a national topic—*Atzimba* (1901), a work describing the conquest of the western state of Michoacán. Despite the compositional advances of this new group of composers, their musical output can be seen solely as re-creational in nature, and not demonstrating a real sense of originality.

Otto Mayer-Serra identifies a series of factors which were essential to the development of Mexican music and which were generally not present throughout the 19th century. These are comprised of the following: (1) a social base that would be interested in promoting serious music, (2) a financial base that could guarantee the continuous presentation of musicians and concerts, (3) a pedagogic-professional base that maintained a high level of interpretation and was able to compete with foreign professional musicians, and (4) a cultural base that recognized the renewed necessity to promote musical culture in diverse social sectors.[10]

Notwithstanding the problematic situation of Mexican music during most of the 1800s, the end of the century also provided a renewed possibility to establish a change in musical direction. Pedro Michaca's treatise *El Nacionalismo Musical en México*, is a

[9] Ibid., 92.
[10] Ibid., 23-24.

valuable source that adequately delineates the way this change came about. Michaca describes the purpose of musical nationalism as leading to spiritual liberation of the society through the development of an individualized language, resulting in universal attainment.[11] He defines it as "the manifestation of the musical-artistic conscience of a nation, through musical works conceived and realized with the composer's own ideas and mediums of expression."[12] He further determines that the main components for these works are provided by society's natural and spontaneous musical expressions.[13] As such, the successful rise of a nationalistic current results from the interaction of four sociological components.

These consist of (1) the society as a whole, providing the musical materials to develop Art works, (2) the folklorist, who collects and selects their music, supplying the materials, (3) the nationalist composer, who studies and carefully assimilates the materials provided by the folklorist, creating music based on a personal ideology and language, and (4) the music critic, whose role is to guide the pubic and the artistic community.[14] Although the nationalist composer relies on the work of the folklorist to illustrate himself, it is essential for him to establish a close relation with society, absorbing its national art, and searching for a personal voice that truly reflects his identification with the members of that society.[15]

Michaca concludes that the preliminary rise of Mexican musical nationalism can give way to works that could be seen as potentially defective due to the obvious consequences of being an exploratory period, developmental in nature, but asserts that

[11] Pedro Michaca. *El Nacionalismo Musical en México* (México D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Sección Editorial, 1931), 3.
[12] Ibid., 4.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 4-5.
[15] Ibid., 6.

they will in turn have the quality of determining the beginning of a new orientation towards achieving Mexican spiritual independence.[16]

2.2 Manuel M. Ponce: Biographical Information

Manuel M. Ponce was born in 1882 in the central state of Zacatecas. After spending his childhood in the neighboring state of Aguascalientes, Ponce moved to Mexico City in 1907, where he studied at the National Conservatory of Music. Dissatisfied with the level of musical education, Ponce traveled to Italy in 1904, where he studied at the *Liceo Musicale* in Bologna with Cesare Dall'Olio and Luigi Torchi.[17] A year later he traveled to Berlin, Germany, and enrolled at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin where he became a student of Martin Krause. Ponce returned to Mexico in 1907, teaching piano in his Aguascalientes home. The untimely death of Ricardo Castro in late 1907 gave Ponce the opportunity to obtain a teaching position in 1908 at the National Conservatory of Music. The year of 1912 was of great importance for Ponce, for not only he was credited with introducing the music of Claude Debussy in Mexico, but also premiered his *Concierto Romántico* and other important works, gaining national recognition.

The cultural and political conflicts generated by the Mexican Revolution of 1910 led Ponce to move to Cuba from 1915 to 1917, where he composed several works influenced by the local culture. Upon his return to Mexico in 1917, he resumed teaching at the Conservatory and also became appointed as conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra.[18] The desire to update his compositional style led him once again to travel to Europe in 1925. He remained there for eight years, studying with Paul Dukas at the

[16] Ibid., 7.
[17] Dahlia Ann Guerra. *Manuel M. Ponce: A study of his solo piano works and his relationship to Mexican musical Nationalism* (DMA Dissertation- University of Oklahoma, 1997), 48.
[18] Ibid., 50.

Ecole Normale de Musique, in Paris.[19] This period, highly experimental, shows impressionistic influences, in addition to an expansive harmonic spectrum.

After receiving a diploma in 1932, Ponce returned to Mexico in 1933, where he was regarded as a European celebrity. He continued teaching at the National Conservatory and the University School of Music.[20] During this last period, he incorporated into his works a pervasive dissonant language and more modern elements. However, a constant during his compositional career was the inclusion of folk themes and melodies into his works, and the need to develop a personal style that reflected the beauty and traditional aspects of Mexican music. Ponce died in his Mexico City home in April 1948, shortly after being awarded the National Prize of Arts and Sciences.

2.3 Ponce's Role in Mexican Musical Nationalism

The role Ponce played in the development of Mexican musical nationalism is consistent with Michaca's ideological perspectives. Noteworthy is the fact that Ponce was not limited to composing, but was also involved in the meticulous task of recollecting the melodies and rhythms that would serve to create a treasury of national music. Ponce's dual role as folklorist and creator assured him a unique place in Mexican history. His work was primarily recognized for the injection in his music of "a wealth of new musical elements through his stylizations that included inexhaustible harmonic and rhythmic possibilities."[21]

Later in his life, and with the previous establishment of the nationalistic tendencies that were to dominate the national musical panorama throughout the first half of the 20th century, Ponce became immersed in a series of non-compositional activities

[19] Ricardo Miranda, "Manuel M. Ponce," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy (Accessed 9 January 2007) Retrieved<http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?from=search&session_search_id=156318569&hitnum=6&section=music.22072>

[20] Guerra, 51.

[21] Ibid., 44.

destined to continue the promotion of Mexican musical nationalism. Thus, he can also be credited for promoting more serious research in the area of ethnomusicology. In 1921, he proposed the creation of a governmental Department of Folklore, envisioning a plan of musical research that would divide the country into specific regions in which delegates would further catalog musical practices. The plan lacked political support and was not realized, leading Ponce to conduct additional practices on his own.[22]

Ponce also undertook nationalistic efforts through musical writings, giving his first conference in 1913 and publishing the collection titled "*Escritos y Composiciones Musicales*" [Writings and Musical Compositions] in 1917.[23]

In addition to founding and directing the well-known "*Revista Musical de México*" [Musical Magazine of Mexico], Ponce also taught 'musical folklore' classes at the University's Music School and the National Conservatory of Music.[24]

The recognition of Ponce's nationalistic achievements is generally considered to encompass his works after 1910, the year of the *Concierto Romántico*'s composition. A study of Ponce's compositional and social philosophy shows that in fact these tendencies not only arose much earlier, but in fact are discreetly incorporated into that very work, setting the tone for Ponce's future nationalistic endeavors.

[22] Carmen Sordo-Sodi. "La Labor de Investigación Folklórica de Manuel M. Ponce" in *Heterofonía* 15, no. 79 (1982), 36-39. Quoted in Guerra, 45.
[23] Guerra, 45-46.
[24] Ibid., 46.

CHAPTER 3

THE *CONCIERTO ROMÁNTICO* FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA: AN INTRODUCTION

3.1 Manuel M. Ponce's Concerto Output

Manuel M. Ponce's concerto output certainly appears to outline a logical progression that reflects his compositional development. While it would be inaccurate to say that each of his three concertos (piano, guitar, violin) was composed during a different compositional period (in fact the guitar concerto and the violin concerto were written only a year apart from each other), a case could be made that the three concertos are quite dissimilar from each other and, as such, represent a distinct facet of the composer's evolving compositional style. The piano concerto has long been seen as one of the most representative works from his Romantic period, while the other two concertos, written more than thirty years later, are the products of a mature composer, vehemently portraying his compositional mastery and command of large form.

The *Concierto del Sur* is Ponce's best-known concerto and his most important work for the guitar. Because the concerto's compositional history spans almost twelve years, it is difficult to categorize its role in Ponce's development. Certain circumstances unique to the composition of this work also account for the special place it holds in the Ponce concerto repertoire. The concerto was written specifically for the Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia, who met Ponce during his stay in Paris and expressed a desire to have a guitar concerto from him as early as 1928.[1] By this time, Ponce had already written a

[1] Alejandro Madrid. "De México, concierto para Andrés Segovia: Una visita al Concierto del sur de Manuel M. Ponce" in *Heterofonía* no. 118-119 (México D.F.: CENIDIM, 1998), 108.

series of works for the Spanish virtuoso and the creation of the concerto would eventually involve a close collaboration between composer and performer. Apparently, Ponce began sketching ideas for the work but had serious doubts about the viability of the guitar as a solo instrument due to its reduced volume capabilities when combined with an orchestra.[2] This factor was probably the foremost reason for not completing the work during the 1920s. Segovia's prolonged insistence finally yielded results by 1940, when Ponce decided to formally focus on completing the concerto. His compositional dilemma may have dissipated in 1939 with the appearance of the Guitar Concerto, Opus 99, by the Italian composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco.[3] During the compositional process, Ponce received technical and musical suggestions from Segovia, who had previously played as a soloist with orchestras and therefore understood the "possibilities and restrictions of such instrumental combination."[4]

The musical style and language in the *Concierto del Sur* derived from Segovia's insistent desire that the concerto should sound 'Spanish'. Segovia even went as far as to suggest Ponce to avoid being modern "in the style of Poulenc and Milhaud."[5] Segovia was known for not being passionate about the contemporary trends in 20th century music, and this limitation might have hindered Ponce's evolving style, which could be seen shifting in that direction with the composition of his Violin Concerto only one year later. The misunderstanding of the style opted by Ponce in the *Concierto del Sur* generated criticism in Mexico, where some argued that the concerto was "frankly Andalusian, improper of a nationalist composer."[6]

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[2] John W. Duarte. *Manuel M. Ponce: Los Tres Conciertos*. Enrique Bátiz, cond. Digital disc. Clásicos Mexicanos, CD SDX21034 (1998): 4.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Madrid, 109.

[5] Ibid., 110

[6] Pablo Castellanos. *Manuel M. Ponce: Ensayo* (México D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Difusión Cultural, Unidad Editorial, 1982), 50.

Having completed the concerto in 1941, Ponce received an invitation to accompany Segovia to South America, where the work was to be premiered. Segovia was extremely pleased with the piece, writing to Ponce: "if this is not your best work, I do not know which one is."[7]

The South American tour took Ponce to Uruguay, Argentina and Chile, and represented an enormous triumph for the composer. The day after the world premiere in Montevideo he wrote to his wife Clementina about the "great success"[8] of the concert. The concerto was premiered in Mexico in 1946, and that same year Segovia played it in New York, earning a positive review from the New York Herald Tribune:

> The Concierto del Sur by Manuel M. Ponce was a delight... It is of great musical interest and abounds in effective means of expressivity. Moreover, the orchestral accompaniment extends the already large capabilities of the guitar timbres and does it in the most attractive and imaginable manner... the beauty of the work is such that one wishes to hear more frequently the guitar as a solo instrument.[9]

Alejandro Madrid makes a significant conclusion in regard to the *Concierto del Sur* in his article "De México, concierto para Andrés Segovia: Una visita al *Concierto del Sur* de Manuel M. Ponce" [From Mexico to Andrés Segovia: A visit to Manuel M. Ponce's *Concierto del Sur*]. Madrid states that the concerto allows us to observe

> the search for a more advanced harmonic language than presented in his early works… and the intention to create music outside of the Euro centrist tradition (although still in accordance with the search that originated his nationalist tendencies.) The unusually long process of composition causes [the concerto] to have one foot in the twenties and another one in the forties (with the stylistic implications that this generates), this therefore being the piece that best allows us to understand the differences between the Ponce that composed in 1912 a piano concerto based on the Romantic model of the nineteenth century and the Ponce that, in 1942, presented the Mexican public a violin concerto which, being one of his best works, lacked the public's appreciation at that time.[10]

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[7] Ricardo Miranda. *Manuel M. Ponce: Ensayo sobre su vida y obra* (México D.F.: CONACULTA, 1998), 85.

[8] Manuel M. Ponce. Letter from Manuel M. Ponce to Clementina Maurel, Montevideo, October 5, 1941 (Manuel M. Ponce Archives). Quoted in Miranda, 85.

[9] Virgil Thompson "Guitar with orchestra" in *New York Herald Tribune*, January 14, 1946. Quoted in Miranda, 90.

[10] Madrid, 117.

The concerto's success not only vindicated and exalted Ponce as a composer, but also generated an awareness of the guitar's potential as a solo instrument, as Nicholas Slonimsky notes: "the full artistic and musical possibilities of the guitar as a solo instrument are demonstrated in Manuel Ponce's concerto, which has been widely performed by the famous guitarist Segovia."[11]

The musical victory generated by the *Concierto del Sur* was a likely source of inspiration that led to the creation of Ponce's Violin Concerto. The work was composed during May and July 1942, but the orchestration was not completed until June 1943.[12] During this process, Ponce also had the opportunity to collaborate with a world-renowned soloist—the Polish violinist Henryk Szerying. The concerto was to be Ponce's last major work and surprisingly, it contains elements from all the important compositional facets of Ponce's life. Jorge Barrón Corvera, in his analysis of the work, effectively describes the seemingly implausible nature of the concerto: "Neoclassic, neoromantic, and impressionistic, this concerto is also one of Ponce's most nationalistic works… Mexico's fascination with Romantic music at the turn of the century is also represented; Ponce quotes his own famous song *Estrellita* in the second movement."[13] Ponce's ability to incorporate this series of disparate styles into a cohesive whole, along with his skillful use of thematic transformations and cyclic devices, is decisive in considering the Violin Concerto as a masterpiece and Ponce's most successful work. Henryk Szerying, to whom the piece is dedicated, called the work "Ponce's greatest creation and one of the best concertos written in the 20th century."[14]

Despite the current celebrated status of the piece, the work endured harsh criticisms after it was premiered by Szerying on August 20, 1943, in a concert with the

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[11] Nicholas Slonimsky. *Music of Latin America* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 42.

[12] Jorge Barrón Corvera. *Three violin works by Mexican composer Manuel María Ponce (1882-1948): Analysis and performance* (D.M.A diss. University of Texas- Austin, 1993), 120.

[13] Barrón Corvera, 120.

[14] David López Alonso. *Ensayo Biográfico: Manuel M. Ponce*, (México D.F.: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1950), 15.

Orquesta Sinfónica de México [Mexico Symphony Orchestra] conducted by Carlos Chávez. Although the modern style of writing was not new for Ponce, many were unable to come to terms with the fact that the lyric and suave Ponce they had so much endeared themselves to, had evolved into a promoter of dissonant 20th century currents. One of the most unsympathetic reviews came from the Spanish critic Jesús Bal y Gay, who described the work as insincere, a consequence of Ponce abandoning the simplicity of his earlier works and trying to speak in an unfelt language.[15] Bal y Gay further charged that the formal development of the work was "unstable and fragmented, and the drifting and confused harmony gave the impression of a struggling student, when in fact it was the will of a mature composer trying to abandon methods completely identified with his nature."[16] The lack of understanding and appreciation of Ponce's sophisticated merging of several compositional styles while maintaining his Romantic sensitivity led him to respond to these criticisms:

> I am still as Romantic as always, but I must evolve. I have not committed a sin other than writing a concerto that everybody applauded. I wrote the concerto with the same sincerity that I wrote my Piano Concerto thirty years ago. Only that these three decades have not passed in vain: how much sadness would I feel if during those long years I had locked myself in my juvenile style. In reference to the comment that I pretend to imitate Carlos Chávez, only a person so ignorant of our incipient musical history like Mr. Bal y Gay would think of putting such absurdity in writing! How sorry should he look to point out in my production a trace of the procedures that Chávez employs in his works. Mr. Bal y Gay pretends to ignore that Chávez was my pupil.[17]

Other critics agreed with Ponce, praising distinct elements in the work like the control of form, the contrapuntal mastery, and the intelligent use of popular motives.[18] Yolanda Moreno Rivas is appreciative of the way Ponce resolved "the disjunction

[15] Jesús Bal y Gay. "El Maestro Ponce y la sinceridad de su 'Concerto'", in *El Universal*, September 23, 1943. Quoted in Miranda, 87.
[16] Ibid. Quoted in Yolanda Moreno Rivas. *Rostros del nacionalismo*, 125.
[17] Manuel M. Ponce. Rafael Mendivil interview. Quoted in Moreno Rivas, 127.
[18] Moreno Rivas, 125.

between Romantic expressivity and modernity, between emotive sincerity and contemporary syntax."[19]

The quotation of Ponce's song *Estrellita* in the Violin Concerto has been a matter of interest for critics and musicologists alike, leading some to speculate as to why Ponce decided to quote himself. Opinions in regard to this matter differ highly: Mexican composer and music critic José Antonio Alcaraz (b.1938)[20] notes the 'tyrannical sign of identification' that Ponce acquired as a result of *Estrellita*'s international fame. He sees the inclusion of the song in this context as a humoristic function that closely approaches nostalgic parody.[21] Contrasting with this view is that of John Duarte, who sees 'bitterness' in the quotation as a result of Ponce's inability to obtain royalties from *Estrellita*'s fame, for he had naively granted all the rights to the editor in 1912, when the song was composed.[22]

The concerto is also known for incorporating a Mexican folk song as the main theme of the Finale. The theme is "Las Mañanitas de Aguascalientes" (Happy Birthday Song from Aguascalientes), one of the many folk tunes that Ponce recollected during his investigation of Mexican music in his late twenties.[23]

Ponce's Violin Concerto can be seen as an eclectic form that soundly and skillfully encompasses the whole of Ponce's compositional career—from his Romantically influenced youth, his experimental period while studying in France, and his adoption of a more dissonant language. During all these developmental stages, Ponce's music maintained a deeply lyrical and expressive nature which incorporated and reflected the elements of beauty found in Mexican music.

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[19] Moreno Rivas, *La composición en México en el Siglo XX*, (México D.F.: CONACULTA, 1994), 23.

[20] Moreno Rivas, 168.

[21] José Antonio Alcaraz. "Cien Años de Soledad, También" in *Centenario Manuel M. Ponce: 1882-1982* (Aguascalientes: Gobierno del Estado de Aguascalientes, 1982), 87.

[22] Duarte, 5.

[23] Barrón Corvera, 139-140.

During the last two years of his life, Ponce began work on a second piano concerto. This was well documented through an interview in December of 1947, where he mentioned that he was working jointly on a Quartet for guitar, violin, viola and cello, which Segovia was supposed to premiere in the United States, and on his second piano concerto, which he had offered to his student Pablo Castellanos.[24] This is one of the very few references that are made in regard to the second concerto, which was not completed when Ponce died in April of 1948. Castellanos mentions this concerto in the catalog he assembled of Ponce's works, citing the existing manuscript but noting that the piece remained unfinished.[25]

Ponce's desire to compose a second piano concerto at that late stage in his life could be a direct result of the overwhelming success achieved by his guitar and violin concertos. While these compositions had increased Ponce's fame to an international status (especially the guitar concerto), he might have felt the need to come back to his preferred instrument as a vehicle to represent his current accomplishments and the mature state of his compositional development. Even after the many accomplishments linked to his close collaboration with Segovia, Ponce is known to have expressed: "I have treated the exquisite guitar as a lover, a sweet lover, but it is the piano who I love the most."[26]

Ponce's intentions to compose a second piano concerto should not be seen, however, as a condemnation or disregard for the early *Concierto Romántico*. There is no reason to believe that Ponce thought poorly of it, or considered his first works as being inferior to his later compositions. In fact Ponce stated in 1920: "I will never deny my early

[24] "El maestro Ponce trabaja a pesar de su enfermedad" in *El Universal*, December 10, 1947. Quoted in Miranda, 90.

[25] Castellanos, 57.

[26] Carlos Vázquez. "Manuel M. Ponce y el Piano" in *Heterofonía* Vol. 15 (México D.F.: CENIDIM, 1982), 14.

compositions. In that respect I will not imitate Díaz Mirón"[27] (referring to Salvador Díaz Mirón (1853-1928), a Mexican poet).

3.2 The *Concierto Romántico*: Compositional Background

The *Concierto Romántico* was not only Ponce's first attempt to compose a piece in a large form, but also his first orchestral work. David López Alonso calls it his first 'symphonic work.'[28] It is certain that the twenty-eight year old Ponce was long overdue to compose a more substantial work, and with this concerto he found the perfect medium to incorporate the compositional insights gained during his European trip. However, along with this new awareness there was also a surge in the imposing Lisztian influence that had penetrated the musical core of some of his early works. Miranda assesses that "an important aspect of the Romanticism cultivated by the author was its relation with Lisztian virtuosity. The etudes for piano- *Juventud* [Youth], *Hacia la Cima* [Towards the Top], *Alma en Primavera* [Soul in Spring], *Preludio Trágico* [Tragic Prelude], just as the eleven *Miniaturas* [Miniatures], are examples of this aspect which would reach its most brilliant and complete moment in the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (1912)."[29]

It is likely that Ponce's admiration for the music of the great Hungarian virtuoso deepened considerably when he became a student of Martin Krause at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin, Germany.[30] Krause had been a disciple of Liszt, and through his studies with him Ponce claimed a direct lineage to Liszt's teachings, being the first Mexican pianist to do so.[31] In addition to the improved technical and pianistic skills that Ponce obtained through his study with Krause, he was also able to meet and interact

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[27] Fradique. "Encuestas de 'Zig-zag'. Confesiones de artistas" in *Zig-zag* (México, Manuel M. Ponce Archives), 28.29. Quoted in Miranda, 120.

[28] López Alonso, *Manuel M. Ponce*, (México D.F.: Ediciones Botas, 1971), 91.

[29] Miranda, 120.

[30] Ibid., 21.

[31] A more detailed discussion in regard to specific examples of Liszt's influence in this concerto will be conducted in Chapter 5.

with important European musical figures of the time like Ferruccio Busoni, Eugene D'Albert and Edwin Fischer, the latter also being a disciple of Krause.[32] This undoubtedly expanded not only his development as a pianist but also his overall musicianship. López Alonso claims that: "when Ponce returned to his homeland in 1908 he had become a consummate virtuoso of the keyboard and had an extraordinary facility to improvise."[33] This coincides with Miranda's view, which appropriately points out that "the heritage of Lisztian virtuosity would be inexorably reflected in a sizeable part of Ponce's solo piano output, primarily in the Rhapsodies, the *Evocaciones* [Evocations], the Concerto, and other scores whose Romantic virtuosity is translated in impeccable pianistic writing."[34]

Despite the overwhelming inspiration that Ponce found through the music of Liszt, his German tour also yielded an unusual influence that would bring him much closer to home. As has been previously documented, shortly before his return to Mexico in the winter of 1906, Ponce received a book of recompilations of Mexican popular songs gathered by Albert Friedenthal from his fellow students in Berlin.[35] This certainly attracted Ponce's attention and led him to research Mexican folk music by documenting and harmonizing traditional Mexican melodies. While the trace to the music of Liszt and the influence of Romanticism on Ponce's piano concerto have been well established, it is certain that he also had the music of his homeland in mind while composing this piece. In fact, López Alonso writes that the *Concierto Romántico*: "is a work of fresh inspiration, full of enthusiasm and passion, of a Romanticism that reminds us somewhat of Chopin, and reveals especially in its second movement, the *Andantino Amoroso*, the nationalist tendencies that by that time were already dominating the composer."[36] [37]

[32] Miranda, 22.
[33] López Alonso, 43.
[34] Miranda, 21-22.
[35] Ibid., 22.
[36] López Alonso, 92.

The work was finished in September of 1910, but very minor details are known about the time surrounding the actual compositional process. Miranda claims that since 1909, Ponce had been in Mexico City working on the concerto and other pieces, and refers to the 1912 premiere of these new works as the 'culmination' of all the compositional efforts undertaken since then.[38] Despite the limited amount of information surrounding the creation of the composition, there are a vast number of references to the premiere of the work. By all accounts, this occurred the night of July 7, 1912 at the Teatro Arbeu [Arbeu Theatre] in Mexico City, in the opening concert of the Beethoven Orchestra series. Ponce was the soloist and the well-known composer Julián Carrillo (b.1875) the conductor.[39] The concerto was repeated two days later in an all Ponce-program that featured the same orchestra and conductor. This time the concert also included the premiere of the *Tres Cuadros Nocturnos* [Three Night Pictures] for string orchestra and the Piano Trio, played by Ponce, violinist Valdés Fraga and cellist Rubén Montiel. In addition to these works, Ponce also played solo piano pieces like the *Tema Variado Mexicano* [Varied Mexican Theme] and his Mexican Rhapsody No. 1.[40]

3.3 The *Concierto Romántico*: Overview of Descriptive References

A variety of allusions to this concerto have been found throughout the existing Ponce literature. Most of them are referential in nature, some critical, and a few of them analytical. Nonetheless, each one of them contributes to an increased understanding of this concerto and therefore bear mentioning in this study.

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[37] David López Alonso mistakenly identifies, as others also have, the second movement of this piece to be the section headed "Andantino Amoroso." The details of this misconception and a profound analysis of the concerto's complex form will be carried out in the fifth chapter of this treatise.

[38] Miranda, 28.

[39] Robert Stevenson. *Music in Mexico: A Historical Survey* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1952), 233.

[40] Miranda, 29.

The best known and certainly the most extraordinary commentary on the night of the premiere is the newspaper review by Luis G. Urbina (also known as *El Cronista de Antaño* [the Chronicler of Yore]), which appeared in *El Imparcial* [The Impartial] on July 10, 1912. Urbina had become acquainted with Ponce after his return from Europe,[41] and the friendship they developed over those years accounts for the extensive, unsurprisingly enthusiastic, and highly poetic depiction of that evening's concert (compiled here from both the Miranda and the López Alonso sources):

> Fiery passion, youthful vigor appears since the initial measures, since the orchestral *tutti.* The piano enters gracefully and, after a beautiful cadence, an amiable and energic theme begins, to which a clarinet adds subtle arabesques. We tend our ears towards the delicacy of the performance, and when the orchestra ends the section we already experience a mysterious delight. But immediately this enjoyment increases like a flame over which air blows, when the violoncellos open the next section with a melody so expressive and penetrating, that all our soul bathes in a tender clarity. It is a song of sorrowful love, an impassioned plea, humid from kisses and tears. The violins greet it with charming gentleness, and the piano repeats it with bitter insistence. From there on all is sparkle and impulse. Orchestra and piano dialogue: they both phrase a theme of unusual structure, of capricious rhythm; polyphony overflows like a rich and shaded cloth, the joy of living rises in gushes of light, like a marvelous fountain; the piano complicates its fantastic flight and the fingers run over the keyboard, chasing the notes with the agility of falconry birds, and after them the orchestra runs too like a band of gleeful hawks. The pianist has made himself admirable; the composer has revealed himself[42] […] The concert… kept the emotion lit like a votive lamp. The triumph was prolonged, intensified, and was like a victorious farewell to the gallant maestro who, in one night, delivered the treasures of his highest inspiration… Few times has an audience been more attracted to the magnetism of an artist. For the dilettante, this concert has been a revelation. For Manuel Ponce, it has been an apotheosis.[43]

Urbina's extremely favorable remarks about the concerto not only reflect the success experienced by Ponce after the premiere of the work, but also provide convincing evidence to Miranda's claim that these concerts represented the

[41] Miranda, 23.

[42] Luis Urbina. "El concierto de anoche", in *El Imparcial*, July 10, 1912. Quoted in López Alonso, 93-94.

[43] Ibid. Quoted in Miranda, 29.

"consolidation of the composer as the most important figure of the Mexican musical scene at that time."[44]

Later observations have also been sympathetic to the work. Noteworthy to mention are the views brought forth by Pablo Castellanos, an "eminent musicologist and… researcher, and also a passionate scholar of Ponce's works."[45] Castellanos studied with Ponce, and as described previously, was the dedicatee of Ponce's unfinished second piano concerto. He was an avid supporter of the *Concierto Romántico* and his book *Manuel M. Ponce: Ensayo* [Manuel M. Ponce: Essay] offers constructive opinions in regard to the composition. In addition to referential information, Castellanos is one of only two authors to offer an analytical approach in terms of form and stylistic qualities.[46] In his comments, Castellanos assesses the importance of noting the Piano Trio and the Piano Concerto as the first two 'fundamental' works of Ponce's output. As noted earlier, Ponce had in fact begun writing the trio in 1905, but the work remained unfinished until 1912.[47] Although Castellanos considers the influence of Liszt in the piano concerto, describing the piece as "perhaps the most important work of his (Ponce's) Romantic phase"[48], he is also sensitive to the work's nationalistic character. He correctly points out the fact that, while the thematic content of the work are not directly based in popular songs, these possess "a certain 'Mexican' character."[49] Furthermore, he speculates that the presence of these Mexican elements went unnoticed because the concerto's value was not fully appreciated in Ponce's time. He concludes that

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[44] Miranda, 29.

[45] Paolo Mello, preface to *Manuel M. Ponce: Ensayo* by Pablo Castellanos (México D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Difusión Cultural, Unidad Editorial, 1982), 13.

[46] Castellanos' analysis of the *Concierto Romántico* will be further disseminated in Chapter 5 of this treatise.

[47] Castellanos, 28.

[48] Ibid., 31.

[49] Ibid.

> the work's transcendence has not been properly recognized yet. In the pianistic literature of all the American continent and the Iberian peninsula, from the period corresponding to Romanticism, there is not a more representative 'nationalist' concerto, for Ricardo Castro's is not of a 'Mexican' type. In no way could it be said that Mac Dowell's concertos or Albeniz' Rhapsody are of more importance and what De Falla wrote afterwards in this genre, is already classified within modern literature.[50]

Yolanda Moreno Rivas is another author that has noted not only the seminal Romantic vein of the concerto, but also the presence of 'Mexican' thematic elements. In her book *Rostros del Nacionalismo en la Música Mexicana* [Faces of Nationalism in Mexican Music], she refers to the concerto as the 'summit' of Ponce's compositional achievements up to 1912[51]. She also identifies the work as "making use of a language clearly related with the last Romantic concertos, and offering not few surprises in relation to its formal conception as well as its content: a cadenza that disposes itself of its virtuosic function to become an element of expressiveness, (and) the evocation of a Mexican song."[52] She also notes that the incorporation of themes arising from Mexican songs represents a definite change in the composer's early musical practice and ideology.[53]

Paolo Mello is yet another researcher who finds nationalist connections to the work. He identifies Ponce's practice as a type of 'conscious nationalism' that evolves through the creation of original motives that clearly acquire characteristics of folkloric elements, both rhythmically and melodically.[54] Mello cites the "Andantino Amoroso" and the "Allegretto" as evident examples of these tendencies, also referring to the central part of the "Allegro" as reflecting the atmosphere of a Mexican dance.[55]

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Moreno Rivas. *Rostros del Nacionalismo*, 95.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Paolo Mello. "Manuel M. Ponce, Músico Polifacético" in *Heterofonía* Vol. 15 (México D.F.: CENIDIM, 1982), 25.
[55] Ibid., 25-26.

In his book *Music in Mexico*, Robert Stevenson briefly discusses the concerto's premiere and uses a musical excerpt from the work to illustrate his views about Ponce. Stevenson notes the composer's

> ability to speak directly to the masses, and yet also to speak, when he so desired, in a sophisticated idiom appealing to the most advanced musical mind. Accused by Bossi in 1905 of writing in an 1830 style, Ponce in the 1930's was an avant-garde. He was able to change with the times. His conversion to newer ways of thinking was, moreover, sincerely felt, and unlike others whose modernisms were an unconvincing veneer, he spoke as urgently in his later style as in his earlier one.[56]

Stevenson illustrates his observations by contrasting Ponce's piano and violin concertos. He includes an excerpt from the piano's presentation of the main theme of the first movement, and also the much commented section headed *Andantino Amoroso* (which he identifies correctly as the 'second group.') Curiously, however, is the fact that the five-measure piano solo excerpt of the first group (Allegro Appassionato) is not accurately represented, as the first four measures are identical to the piano part but the fifth one is not. In fact, the fifth measure contains material that belongs to the orchestral introduction, which actually precedes the entrance of the piano part. While Stevenson's misrepresentation of the piano's 'cadenza-like' first group excerpt does not compromise his views, this inaccuracy should be pointed out to avoid misreading the material that appears in the book. Stevenson also comments on the orchestral texture, which he describes as being composed by "lush 'Rachmaninoffian' chords", in contrast to those of the Violin Concerto which are made up of "highly dissonant contrapuntal lines."[57]

These views by Robert Stevenson are consistent with those of other authors that see not only the influence of Liszt in the concerto, but also that of other major composers. Jorge Barrón Corvera sees the cyclical nature of the work to be suggestive

[56] Stevenson, 235.
[57] Ibid., 237.

not only of Liszt, but also of César Franck.[58] As noted earlier, David López Alonso found the concerto reminiscent of Chopin. López Alonso discusses the concerto from the viewpoint of Ponce's development as a composer. He praises the work's musical significance by stating that "real critics and musicians judge the Concerto as a Romantic jewel on which Paul Dukas told the composer: 'Today we do not write like this anymore.' Ponce took Dukas' advice without profoundly immersing himself in Romanticism."[59] López Alonso also claims that several years after the premiere Ponce made revisions to the work, "taking away parts that he found superfluous and refining the orchestration with magnificent sonorities."[60] This is one of only two resources to make such a claim and because of the lack of specificity as to when these revisions were made or what exactly was changed, the comment should be taken with caution. Nonetheless, because of the observable corrections and changes in the 1910 score, it seems likely that at some point Ponce reworked the concerto.[61]

The other source that claims the work was revised is an article by José Antonio Alcaraz titled *Cien Años de Soledad, También* [One Hundred Years of Solitude, Also], which is included in the book issued by the state of Aguascalientes in celebration of Ponce's centennial (*Centenario de Manuel M. Ponce 1882-1982*). Alcaraz, much in the manner of Luis Urbina's thoughtful review of the premiere, praises the work distinctly and in great detail:

> Full of romantic exaltation, the Piano Concerto is one of the most vigorous manifestations of the young Ponce's personality, who through contact with popular music in its most pure and refined expressions, would evolve so much. Both vehement and evocative, Ponce's Piano Concerto contains within the marked expressiveness of its context, a highly laudable anxiety to serve itself from the so called 'larger forms', in this case the concerto structure according to the habitual tenets of the Romantic conventional style in the second half of the nineteenth century. The sonorous material, both in the soloist's part and the

[58] Barrón Corvera, 23.
[59] López Alonso. *Manuel M. Ponce: Ensayo Biográfico*, 36.
[60] López Alonso. *Manuel M. Ponce*, 94.
[61] Refer to Chapter 4 for a discussion regarding revisions to the work.

> orchestra, is of a much defined character: this occurs in the agitated episodes, the poetic ones, and the merely virtuosic ones. Ponce accentuates each trait emphatically to prevent every possible ambiguity. Certainly there is in the work a florid rhetoric that at times dangerously approaches grandiloquence, but the refined musical instinct and Ponce's innate good taste cause it to –more in an intuitive form, than as a product of a strict spirit- prevent the extremes, shifting direction when he is very close to excesses and overflow, thus proceeding to a contrasting section. Rich in opportunities for the soloist's display, with a conservative orchestration that nonetheless possesses some ingenious details (especially in the moments that could be classified as melancholic) the Concerto was subject to a revision, in which Ponce was able to maintain the expressive plenitude of the work while filtrating the writing to achieve a warm equilibrium. This ulterior balance preserves the emotive eloquence, a fundamental force of this music since the initial moment it was written.[62]

Joel Almazán Orihuela's article, dealing with thematic integration in the *Concierto Romántico*, is primarily an analytical resource that provides valuable insight regarding the inner workings of the composition. Despite the more academic and scholarly nature of the article, Almazán also incorporates general descriptive remarks about the work. As with many of the references found throughout the literature, a reverential tone towards the concerto is implied. Almazán goes as far as to suggest that the concerto should be given a higher rank not only within Mexican works for piano and orchestra, but also 'non-Mexican' piano concerto literature.[63] This notion is supported through a thorough and elegant analysis of the work, and a descriptive interpretation of his aesthetic view of the concerto. According to Almazán "the compositional coherence that is offered through various aspects of this work (including bi-tonality, and the treatment of thematic material, timbre, and rhythm), allows the listener to enjoy twenty minutes of wonderful musical ideas, presented practically without interruption. The melodic lines flow continuously, naturally, and with unusual beauty, through the almost permanent dialogue between the soloist and the orchestra."[64]

[62] Alcaraz, 75 & 77.
[63] Almazán, 118.
[64] Ibid.

While most critics and authors have championed the *Concierto Romántico* as a revolutionary work essential to the establishment of Mexican musical nationalism, others have also been observant of its possible pedagogical value. Such is the case of critic Adolfo Salazar, whose 1939 review of the work combines the recurrent adulatory prose highly characteristic of the concerto's reviews with recommendations of an educational nature:

> But what could be said, in the most affectionate and profoundly pleased tone, of the work of a youngster that maintains all its fragrance and smoothness, youthful at the hour of maturity? Great virtue, and proved so few times! After thirty years, Maestro Ponce's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra is a live work, eloquent, authentically fresh, without trace of the makeup and retouching of those who, with an old soul, want to show youthfulness at the time of composing, agglomerating in their technique all the novelties of the fives and tens from Central Europe and North America. No. Just plainly good music. If inspiration and form belong to the repertoire of all times, that is their advantage: that they are for all times too. The Ponce Concerto, for its perfect writing and its cordial abundance, for its Teutonic confidence, for the type of classic inspiration over which overflows, at times, an aura redolent of a seraphic franckism is, or in fact, should be, a repertoire work. Young Mexican pianists can find in it the best way to enter their life as performers.[65]

Despite the numerous amounts of references that positively portray the work's compositional merits, others offer complimentary but not entirely uncritical views. Such is the case of John Duarte, who commends the emergence of the composer's nationalist character, but criticizes the work as being essentially European music written by a Mexican composer. Duarte also expresses disapproval of the fact that, being an early work, Ponce had yet to learn to express his passions with more economy of means.[66]

Notwithstanding these criticisms of the work and its generally underrated status within Ponce's compositional oeuvre, the Concerto remained an obscure cornerstone of the composer's output up to his death. The celebrated composer Carlos Chávez (1899-1978), who studied with Ponce, eloquently alluded to it during a speech to honor

[65] Adolfo Salazar. "La vida musical. El 'concerto' del Maestro Ponce" in *El Universal*, July [1 ?] 1939. Quoted in Miranda, 81.

[66] Duarte, 3.

Ponce's selection as the recipient of the coveted *Premio Nacional de Artes y Ciencias* [National Prize of Arts and Sciences] in February of 1948, just a few months before his death:

> Ponce's historical situation in the development of Mexican music is of fundamental significance. He instituted the great forms, with his Trio and his Piano Concerto, at the beginning of the century; he is the first great 'explorer' of Mexican popular art and the precursor of the first openly Nationalist tendency in our country; his work, fecund and uninterrupted, has culminated with creations which, like his Guitar Concerto, have reached universal consecration.[67]

3.4 Performance History during Ponce's Life

Although the *Concierto Romántico* would never achieve the compositional success and recognition of Ponce's other two concertos (which raised the composer's fame to an international status), it did receive a considerable number of performances during Ponce's life. Ponce, in a soloist role, was the main promoter, which offers proof to discard the notion that he disowned the concerto when in fact he thought highly of its merits.

After the premiere performances of 1912 in Mexico City, Ponce played his concerto again in Cuba in 1916. This information is listed by Rodrigo Herrera in his treatise "The Chronology, List of Works, and Nationalist Ideology of Manuel M. Ponce," which cites for many of its references a large collection of five volumes of newspaper clippings, assembled by Ponce's wife, Clementina Maurel de Ponce, and in possession of Carlos Vázquez. According to this source, on November 12, 1916 Ponce played in Havana a recital that included his Piano Sonata No. 1, his concert etude *Alma en Primavera* [Soul in Spring], *Elegia de la Ausencia* [Absence Elegy], his third Cuban Rhapsody, and his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in a quintet version. In regard to this piano and string quintet version of the *Concierto Romántico*, the present status of

[67] Jesus C. Romero. "Manuel M. Ponce, Premio Nacional" in *Nuestra Música*, año III, núm. 10, 1948, 98. Quoted in Miranda, 89.

the arranged score, if it still exists, is unknown. On December of that same year, Ponce played the concerto in Mexico City, once more in the Arbeu Theater, with the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jesús Acuña.[68] The concerto was then played again on October 13, 1919 by Salvador Ordoñez, in a performance conducted by Julián Carrillo.[69] Ordoñez was a pupil of Ponce that, according to Miranda, would become one of his most important students and, along with Carlos Chávez and Antonio Gómez Anda, would play a substantial role in Mexico's musical life.[70]

Two years passed before the concerto was played again, in a performance that took place on July 29, 1921 at the Teatro Degollado [Degollado Theatre] of Guadalajara, Jalisco. Ponce and his wife Clementina were the soloists with Amador Juárez conducting the Orquesta Sinfónica de Guadalajara [Guadalajara Symphony Orchestra], in an all-Ponce program. Along with the concerto, the program included the orchestral arrangement of the popular *Balada Mexicana* [Mexican Ballade], two songs for orchestra based on texts of Luis Urbina, the *Interludio Elegiaco* [Elegiac Interlude], and his *Gavotte*.[71] Ponce played the concerto in his home state of Aguascalientes in April 4,1923, a performance in collaboration with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Aguascalientes [Aguascalientes Symphony Orchestra], conducted by Apolonio Arias.[72]

According to Herrera, Salvador Ordoñez gave the United States premiere of the work by performing the concerto in Los Angeles, in 1924.[73] He would play it again the following year in a performance at the Philharmonic Hall of Los Angeles, an event that

[68] Jorge Barrón Corvera. *Manuel M. Ponce: a Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Ct.: Praeger, 2004), 36.
[69] This reference, also listed by Herrera in the Chronology of Events of Ponce's life, fails to provide information as to where the concert was played or what orchestra participated.
[70] Miranda, 33.
[71] Miranda, 52.
[72] Barrón Corvera. *Manuel M. Ponce: a Bio-Bibliography*, 36.
[73] Clema Maurel de Ponce Archives. Quoted in Herrera, 83.

made Ponce proud not only because his concerto was being played, but because it was a former student who was promoting it.[74]

The next recorded performance of the work would occur twelve years later, when Ponce revived the work and was the soloist in a concert that took place on October 29, 1936 in Mexico City, with the Orquesta Sinfónica de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México [National Autonomous University of Mexico Symphony Orchestra], conducted by José F. Vázquez.[75] Ponce played the concerto again on June 28, 1939. He was accompanied by the Sinfónica de Mexico [Mexico Symphony], conducted by Carlos Chávez. Miranda notes the fact that this appeared to be a questionable program, because it included an early work, and a soloist (Ponce) who was approaching his sixties and was not properly a professional pianist. Nonetheless, he mentions that in fact the performance was a memorable one.[76]

The concerto received its South American premiere in Montevideo, Uruguay on October 12, 1941. The performance was part of a series of concerts that formed part of a tour in which Ponce's *Concierto del Sur* was premiered. The program was formed by the *Estampas Nocturnas* [Night Stamps], *Ferial*, and the piano concerto, which was played by Andrés Segovia's wife, Francisca Madriguera.[77] The last time Ponce performed his concerto, which also appears to be the last performance of the work during his lifetime, was in 1943, when he collaborated again with Carlos Chávez.[78] [79]

3.5 The *Concierto Romántico*'s Place in Mexican Piano Concerto Literature

The *Concierto Romántico* holds a very special place in Mexican piano concerto literature. At the time of composition, the work was the second piano concerto written by

[74] Miranda, 54.
[75] Barrón Corvera. *Manuel M. Ponce: a Bio-Bibliography*, 36.
[76] Ibid, 81.
[77] Miranda, 85.
[78] Ibid, 86.
[79] Miranda does not list when the work was performed, or with what orchestra it was played.

a Mexican composer, preceded only by Ricardo Castro's work of that genre. Castro was a brilliant Mexican pianist who, like Ponce, studied in Europe. He was the best known Mexican piano virtuoso of the late 19th century and his Piano Concerto, Op. 22 was premiered in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1904.[80] Castro even had the privilege of having the work published by the Leipzig firm of Frederich Hofmeister, who presented it in full score and in a two-piano reduction.[81] Robert Stevenson observes the concerto's affinity with Romantic music as well, noting traces of Carl Maria Von Weber in the Polonaise-like finale. He also comments on the influence of Liszt, which can be seen through the extensive use of the diminished-seventh chord, abrupt modulations, and generally through the overall pianistic figurations.[82] Liszt could have also inspired Castro in the proposed cyclic plan of the work, seen in the incorporation of the main theme from the first movement in the fast section of the second movement and in the coda of the Finale. The *Concierto Romántico*'s cyclic design might have thus derived not only from Liszt's examples, but also from Castro's appropriation of them. While traces of Romanticism are found in both Castro's and Ponce's concertos, Castro's work does not contain any of the Mexican elements that Ponce's does. Consequently, the *Concierto Romántico* can be considered both the first nationalist concerto and the work where Ponce broke the stereotype of his early style as exclusively associated with the European Romantic currents of the late 19th century. López Alonso substantiates these claims when comparing both works. He notes that Castro's concerto "surpasses Ponce's in the orchestral part. However, Ponce's concerto shows originality both in terms of harmony and in the inclusion of Mexican themes, an element which had not been previously explored."[83] The *Concierto Romántico*'s pioneering role as a nationalist work would

[80] Stevenson, 212.
[81] Ibid, 213.
[82] Ibid, 214.
[83] López Alonso. *Ensayo Biográfico*, 36.

influence the Mexican school of composition, serving as a model to future composers writing in that genre. The most notable of these, whose piano concertos were written during Ponce's lifetime, were those of Jose Rolón and his student Carlos Chávez.

Rolón had been a fellow student of Ponce in Paul Dukas' composition class, and as such he was influenced by the French Impressionist School. Nonetheless, these tendencies do not appear in his 1935 Piano Concerto, a work which Gerard Behague describes as exhibiting "a modernistic virtuoso style whose rhythmic intricacies result from the combination of folk or popular rhythms."[84] In the case of Carlos Chávez, his concerto can be seen as a product resulting from the Aztec Renaissance, an Indianist movement in the arts that attempted to revive pre-conquest Indian musical practices.[85] Although Behague notes that Chávez geared more towards achieving an 'international' style in this particular work, he identifies the concerto as synthesizing Mexican folk-music elements.[86] The new generation of musicians that followed the steps of Chávez and Rolón continued the flourishing tradition of nationalist and modernistic concerto writing that had begun with the *Concierto Romántico* in 1910. This practice underwent a complete transformation during the 20th century as later composers incorporated the most current stylistic trends with technological advances in music. Table 3.1 presents a chronological outline of Mexican piano concertos and works for piano and orchestra beginning with the Castro Concerto of 1904 to present day. While it would be ambitious and unnecessary to consider every single piano concerto written in Mexico since 1904, the list is instead representative of all major Mexican composers.

[84] Gerard Behague. *Music in Latin America: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979),128.
[85] Ibid., 129.
[86] Ibid.,138.

Table 3.1 Chronological Outline of piano concertos and works for piano and orchestra by Mexican composers[87]

Composer's Name	Name of Work	Year Composed
Ricardo Castro	*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in A Major, Op. 22*	1904
Manuel M. Ponce	*Concierto Romántico for Piano and Orchestra*	*1910*
Jose Rolón	*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*	1935
Carlos Jimenez Mabarak	*Concerto for Piano and Strings*	1938
Carlos Chávez	*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*	1942
Blas Galindo	*Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra*	1942
Carlos Jimenez Mabarak	*Concerto in C for Piano and Orchestra*	1945
Joaquin Gutierrez Heras	*Divertimento for Piano and Orchestra*	1949
Julián Carrillo	*Concerto for Piano in Thirds of Tone and Orchestra*	1962
Blas Galindo	*Concerto No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra*	1962
Mario Kuri Aldana	*Pasos [Steps] for Piano and Orchestra*	1963
Carlos Jimenez Mabarak	*Sinfonia Concertante for Piano and Orchestra*	1968
Daniel Ayala	*Concerto for Piano and Chamber Orchestra*	1970
Manuel Enriquez	*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*	1970
Manuel de Elías	*Concertante for Piano and Orchestra*	1975
Armando Lavalle	*Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra 'Tolloacan'*	1978
Federico Ibarra	*Concerto for Amplified Piano and Orchestra*	1980
Hermilio Hernández	*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*	1981
Leonardo Velazquez	*Concerto for Piano and Chamber Orchestra*	1982
Armando Lavalle	*Concerto No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra*	1986
Samuel Zyman	*Concerto for Piano and Chamber Ensemble*	1988
Max Lifchitz	*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*	1989

[87] Compiled from Eduardo Soto Millan's *Diccionario de Compositores Mexicanos de Música de Concierto- Siglo XX* [*Dictionary of Mexican Composers of Concerto Music-Twentieth Century*] and Yolanda Moreno Rivas' *La Composición en México en el Siglo XX* [*Composition in Mexico in the Twentieth Century*].

CHAPTER 4

SCORE COMPARISON AND PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Score Comparison

4.1.1 Overview of Sources

The need for the editorial research conducted in this chapter stems from the fact that a definite edition of the *Concierto Romántico* is not currently available. This can be clearly observed by comparing and contrasting the three different sources that were used for this study.

The first score (a primary source) is the copy of the original manuscript, written by Ponce, and bearing his signature with a date of September 1910. This manuscript in turn was revised by pianist Carlos Vázquez in 1956, eight years after the composer's death. In his revision, Vázquez addresses important interpretative suggestions in regard to both agogics and dynamics, and also clarifies parts in which the written notes are unclear. The supposed origin for some of the revisions is the private recording in which Ponce himself performs the concerto, and in Vázquez' possession at the time of the revision. Vázquez is also occasionally careful to distinguish his personal opinions from those indicated by Ponce in the score, a process undertaken through the documenting of hand-written side notes and the marking of his initials next to the parts in question. While the guidelines and suggestions provided by Vázquez are helpful in reaching a better understanding of Ponce's intent, Vázquez himself recognized that after his revisions, the manuscript "passed through various hands."[1] This complicated the editing process, making very difficult to determine the originality of certain elements, particularly

[1] Carlos Vázquez, telephone interview with the author, 8 March, 2007.

articulations and dynamic markings, many of which appear to have been added at a later date. In this context it should be noted, as described in Chapter 3, that it was likely that Ponce revised the concerto several years after its completion. As such, it is possible that many of these additional markings could have been the product of Ponce's own revision. In some instances, traces of this work can be seen through visible adjustments made in the score like the crossing out or deleting of material. However, it is impossible to determine exactly the nature of such a revision and the changes subsequently made by Vázquez and others amending the score after him. Despite these unfortunate facts, the orchestral manuscript remains the most original and trustworthy of the three sources used, and while not entirely without flaws, it serves as a good guide to ascertain the accuracy of the other two scores.

The second source used for this treatise is the printed edition created by Peer Music Classical. As mentioned previously, Peer International Corporation owns the copyright to the *Concierto Romántico*, and although their edition is not purchasable, performing materials for the concerto are available for rent. Peer's ownership of the copyright has probably been a determining factor preventing the work from being revised and edited in Mexico, where the copyrighted version of the orchestral manuscript and the piano reduction are the sources generally used to learn and study the concerto. The Peer printed edition will be the score used for all the musical examples depicted in this and the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

The third source consulted for the creation of this study is a copy of a two piano reduction, archived at the library of the National School of Music, in Mexico City. Joel Almazán Orihuela also used this source in his *Heterofonía* article dealing with the concerto's thematic integration. The manuscript contains no reference to either the date of its creation or the author, which was long thought to be Carlos Vázquez (Almazán also identifies him as such in his article). Vázquez recently noted that he has never

written a piano reduction of the concerto, and he believes it was Ponce himself who transcribed it.[2] While there is no reason to question Vázquez' assertions, it seems unlikely that the piano reduction found at the National School of Music library was written by Ponce, as will be explained later. It is possible that Vázquez was referring to an earlier two-piano reduction, an unpublished score which Rodrigo Herrera lists as being written for a concert in 1921, the date of composition and current status of which is unknown.[3] In any case, the existing piano reduction is an important source that should be further analyzed and contrasted with the two other scores used in this research.

Although Ponce's piano concerto is known today as the *Concierto Romántico*, a certain degree of confusion has derived from this title, stemming from the fact that each of the three scores consulted bears a different name. The manuscript of the full orchestral score dating from 1910 is labeled '*Konzert*.'[4] This particular title is intriguing as the concerto appears to have been composed entirely in Mexico and no connection exists linking the composition of the concerto to Ponce's stay in Berlin, four years before the completion of the work. Consequently there would be no reason for heading the composition in German. However, it is possible that Ponce actually began drafting the work during his studies there, like he did with the Piano Trio. The Trio's composition began in Europe (Italy) but was finished in Mexico, and perhaps this is also the case for the piano concerto. Carlos Vázquez believes this to be "probable" although there is no conclusive evidence in this regard.[5] The title of the work suggests that Ponce was certainly thinking of the composition as following the rich European Romantic tradition of a piano concerto in the old heroic mold. In fact, Frank Oteri, in his Ponce overview for Peer Classical Music, describes the work as "a full-blown heroic romantic epic

[2] Carlos Vázquez interview.
[3] Herrera, 100.
[4] Manuel M. Ponce. *Konzert.* Full orchestral score manuscript. 1956 revision by Carlos Vázquez, (New York: Peer International Corporation, 1973), 1.
[5] Carlos Vázquez interview.

characteristic of fin-de-siecle Europe… a showcase for the virtuosity of the composer… [which] still has the power to dazzle audiences."[6] It therefore seems likely that the Romantic European style of composition that permeates the work led Ponce to give it a toning title. Vázquez believes the title could have emerged as a result of Ponce's need to differentiate the new musical currents developing in the country at that time with the more 'old-fashioned' style of his earlier compositions.[7] To exemplify his view, Vázquez mentions the 1912 recital in which Ponce's students played the music of Claude Debussy for the first time in Mexico. This was an important event, introducing a new musical style with which Mexican audiences were not familiar. Ponce could have then labeled the composition as "*Concierto Romántico*" to make a distinction from the stylistic qualities of the concerto with the decreased "Romantic" affinity of later works composed after 1910.[8] The two-piano manuscript bears the title '*Concerto*.'[9] This strengthens the idea that it was not Ponce who created the reduction, but rather somebody else who was not familiar with the label of "*Concierto Romántico*." This can be inferred through the assumed conclusion that even if this score was based on the 1921 reduction, the heading of "*Concierto Romántico*" would have been adopted by then. The printed score from Peer International Corporation is headed *Concierto Romantico* (sic). The original copyright date from this edition is 1956 (renewed in 1978), which indicates that this version was created after Vázquez' revision. If Vázquez' opinion is accurate, and despite the misspelling, this source correctly displays the name as Ponce at some point would have intended to identify it.

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[6] Frank Oteri. "Manual Ponce" (sic) (Accessed 23 February 2007) Retrieved in <www.peermusicclassical.com/composer/composerdetail.cfm?detail=ponce>

[7] Carlos Vázquez interview.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Manuel M. Ponce. *Concerto.* Manuscript score reduction for two pianos M3 6.5.74.P6. (Biblioteca de la Escuela Nacional de Música, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. México D.F., México), 1.

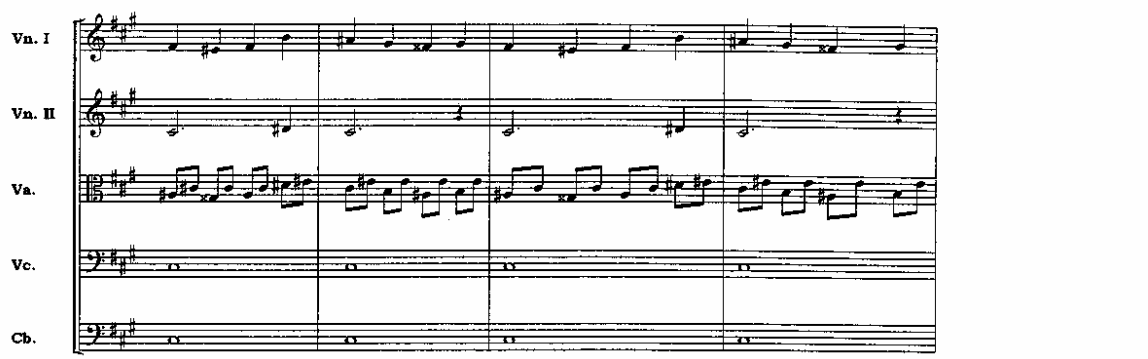
4.1.2 The Orchestral Manuscript and the Printed Edition

A close comparison of both the orchestral manuscript and the Peer printed editions indicates that the manuscript served as the main source leading to the creation of the printed version. This is substantiated through the fact that the printed edition contains many of the inaccuracies found in the manuscript. Notwithstanding this evidence, the manuscript and the printed edition are in fact quite dissimilar from each other. The differences between the two sources mainly reside in the disproportionate amount of discrepancies in terms of articulation marks and dynamic markings and shadings that appear in the manuscript, but are not included in the printed edition (throughout large sections of the piece, inconsistencies appear in almost every measure). It is probable that lack of detail observed in the printed version reflects the editor's doubts in regard to the originality of the markings found in the manuscript. The inability to determine which of them were Ponce's and which were not might have influenced the editor's decision to include a very limited amount of markings. While this posture is respectable as it tries to honor the composer's musical intent, the resulting score suffers from a lack of vital information that is essential for an appropriate rendition of the work. In turn, anybody considering giving an orchestral performance of the concerto should consult the manuscript and personally determine which of the many markings in the score should be followed. Anyone unfamiliar with the piece and with only the printed edition at hand will have an extremely difficult time determining the many places where a variety of articulations, agogics, and dynamics are needed.

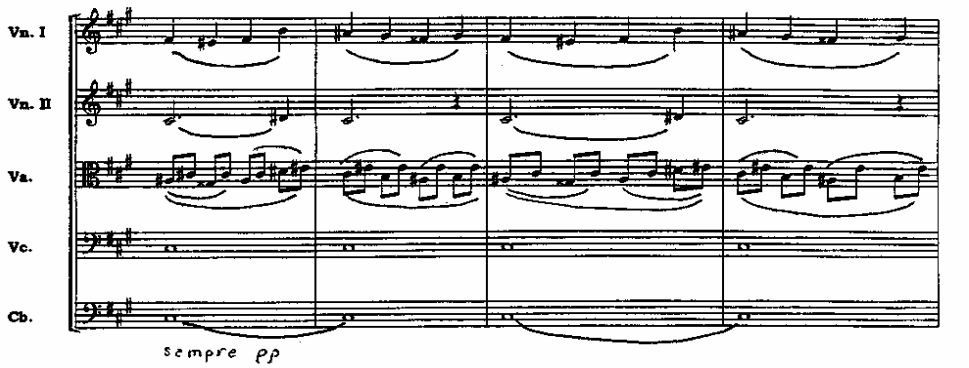
An example that adequately portrays the discrepancies found between the manuscript and the printed edition can be found in the strings' parts in measures 72-75 of the "Allegro Appassionato" section. Simply in these four bars, the measure-long slurs appearing in the Violin 1 and Viola part in the orchestral manuscript are missing in the printed edition. The same problem occurs in the slurs in measures 72 and 74 in the

second Violin part. Additionally, the C-Sharp whole notes appearing in measures 72 and 74 in the Bass part should be tied to the same notes in measures 73 and 75. Finally, the *sempre pp* marking appearing in the Bass part is also missing in the printed edition. Example 4.1a shows the unmarked printed edition, while Example 4.1b incorporates the markings in that same passage from the orchestral manuscript.

Example 4.1a. Unmarked printed edition, “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 72-75



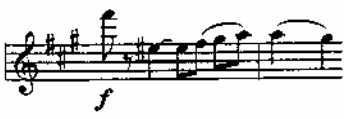
Example 4.1b. Orchestral manuscript with articulation and dynamic markings added, “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 72-75



In addition to the innumerable differences regarding agogics and dynamics, the manuscript and the printed edition also contain certain misprints, as mentioned earlier. In some instances, the manuscript is correct and the edition is not, while in others they are both inaccurate.

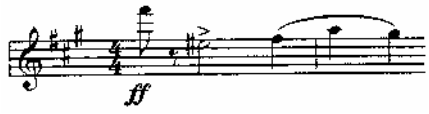
One of the main problems associated with the printed edition is the rhythmic and melodic misrepresentation of the head motive of the "Allegro Appassionato," in the first measure of the piece. An accurate depiction of the melody (as heard in the first Violin and first Flute) is shown below.

Example 4.2. Accurate representation of melodic motive, "Allegro Appassionato," m. 1



This motive appeared correctly in the orchestral manuscript, and Vázquez recently identified it as such,[10] but a later hand subsequently erased it and changed it, leading to the misrepresentation in the printed edition. The incorrect rhythm and melody contrasting that of Example 4.2 (in the same instruments) is illustrated in Example 4.3.

Example 4.3. Inaccurate representation of melodic motive, "Allegro Appassionato," m. 1

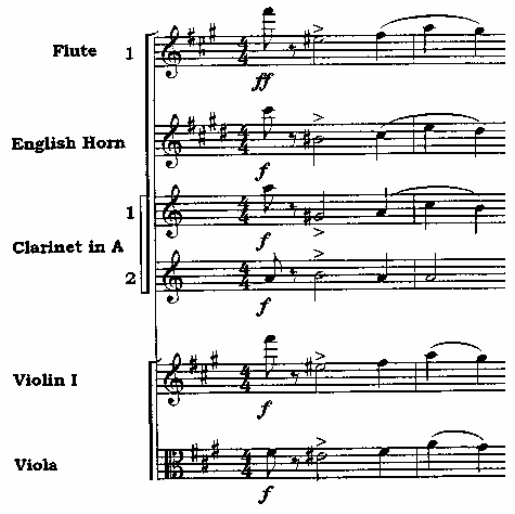


This alteration is inexplicable and musically unsustainable, for a close analysis of all other appearances of this motive finds that they follow the melody and rhythm shown in Example 4.2. Such is the case of the orchestral return of the main theme of the "Allegro Appassionato" in measure 185. The first eight bars of the return are identical to those found at the beginning of the concerto. It is therefore highly unlikely that the head of the main motive should be different in this return. In that regard, the only certain fact is that neither Ponce nor Vázquez were responsible for this change and as such, its inclusion in the printed edition is unacceptable. Example 4.4a illustrates the altered motive (measure

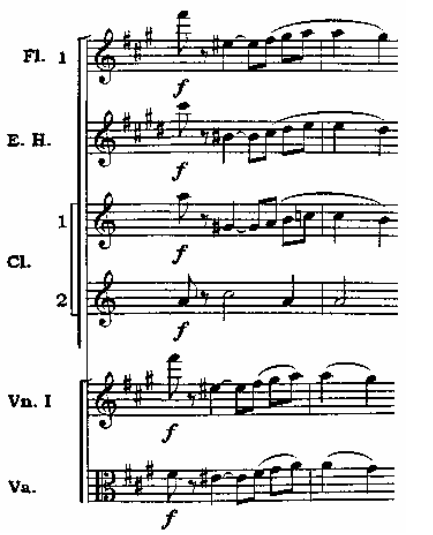
[10] Carlos Vázquez interview.

1) while Example 4.4b offers the correct representation (measure 185). These examples are inclusive of all the instruments which have been altered (first Flute, English Horn, first Clarinet, first Violin and Viola). Additionally, the second Clarinet part is also incorrect in measure 1 (the notes should be A, C, A—just like in measure 185).

Example 4.4a. Alteration of the melodic motive in multiple instruments, “Allegro Appassionato,” m. 1

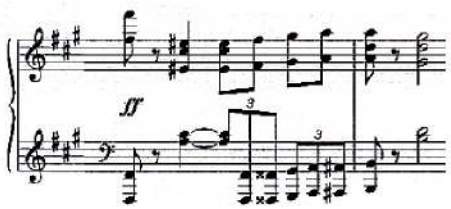


Example 4.4b Accurate display of the melodic motive in multiple instruments, “Allegro Appassionato,” m. 185



Another notorious misprint appears in the piano's solo presentation of the "Allegro Appassionato" first theme. This is an example of a mistake in the orchestral manuscript that was copied identically in the printed edition. In this passage, the tie in the piano's right hand part is missing, although it does appear in the left hand (Example 4.5):

Example 4.5. Misprint in the piano's right hand part (tie missing), "Allegro Appassionato," m. 46



While the discrepancies in terms of articulation and dynamic marks, dynamic shadings, and agogics, are to a certain degree controversial, note mistakes in either the manuscript or the printed edition are easily identifiable and should be corrected. Due to the considerable amount of instances in need of rectification, these musical examples will be included for reference at the end of this study (refer to Appendix B).

4.1.2 The Orchestral Manuscript and the Piano Reduction

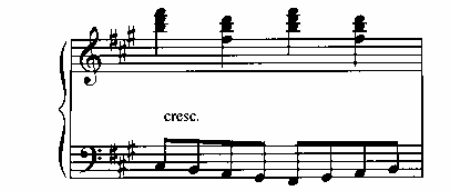
The piano reduction consulted for this study, as mentioned earlier, is a manuscript copy of the score in possession of the library at the National School of Music in Mexico City, identified with the call number M3 6.5.74.P6. This manuscript also misrepresents the first measure of the piece and the return of the same material in measure 185 (although other appearances of the same motive appear correctly). This discrepancy corroborates the fact that it was not Ponce who wrote it. A possible explanation for the mistake shown in Example 4.3 is that this reduction was based on the orchestral manuscript that was altered after the 1956 revision. Another possible

reason would be that this version existed prior to 1956, and the motive was changed to simplify the orchestral version. In turn, the reduction could have later been used by somebody other than Vázquez to revise the manuscript, altering the motive with the certainty that the reduction, being an earlier source, was correct.

The main problem associated with the piano reduction, however, is the fact that the initial piano solo presentation of the main "Allegro Appassionato" theme (mm. 46-59) is missing altogether from the score. While Vázquez suggests that the incorporation of this cadenza-like introduction is 'optional,'[11] its exclusion strongly affects the overall character of the piano part, a factor derived from the resulting unorthodox transition from measure 45 to measure 60 in which the upper right hand trill and the C-Sharp dominant seventh harmony are left unresolved.

Another conflicting part occurs in measure 18 of the "Allegro Appassionato," where the material of the reduction does not exactly correspond to the notes found in the orchestral manuscript. A more appropriate reduction for this measure is shown in Example 4.6:

Example 4.6. Proposed reduction of orchestral material, "Allegro Appassionato," m. 18

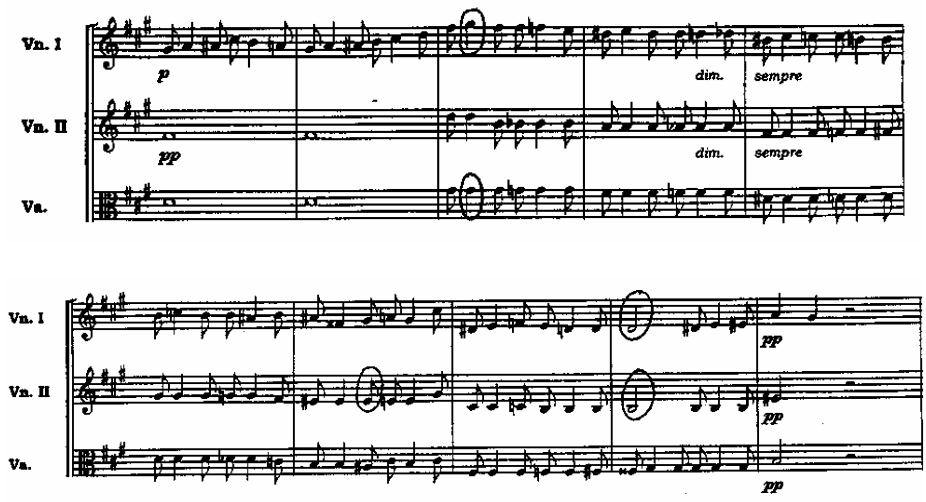


Note inaccuracies also occur in the chromatic descent (mm. 197-203) of the same section, particularly in measures 197, 201, and 203. In measure 197, the F-Sharps appearing in the second chord in the right hand should be changed to G-Sharps. In measure 201, the third right hand chord should have an E-Sharp, not an E-natural. In

[11] Carlos Vázquez interview.

measure 203, the rhythm of the first three right hand chords is inconsistent with that of the manuscript. The B and the D found in those three chords should be played only once as half-notes. Only the bottom voice of those chords (corresponding to the viola part) continues the syncopated motion of the previous measures. The correct notes not appearing in the piano reduction are shown in Example 4.7:

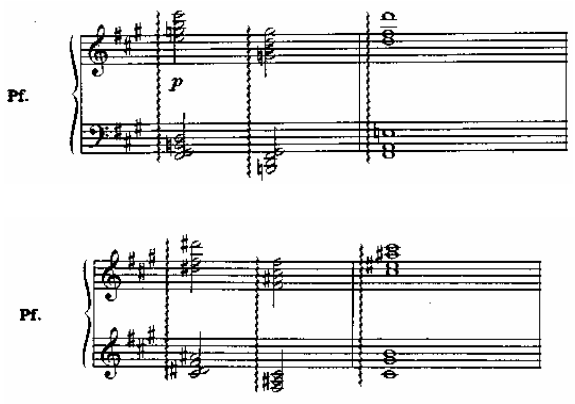
Example 4.7. Correct pitches not appearing in the piano reduction, “Allegro Appassionato,” mm.195-204



A point of interest arises in measures 68-69 and 72-73 of the “Allegro Appassionato.” While the piano reduction is certainly the least trustworthy of all three sources, in this particular example it shows more consistency than the manuscript. These two measure excerpts are comprised of the same material in two different keys. Measure 68 outlines essentially a G major harmony (with an added sixth in the piano part) that moves to a D7 chord in measure 69. In measures 72-73, an F-Sharp chord (added sixth) proceeds to a C-Sharp dominant seventh harmony. The discrepancy with the orchestral manuscript (and consequently with the printed edition) occurs in measures 69 and 73, where the dominant seventh chords of those measures also have a sixth added to them in the piano reduction. These result in the right hand chord of measure 69

containing the pitches D, F#, B, and D, while the left hand outlines the dominant seventh chord with the notes D, F# and C. Measure 73 is consistent with this spelling, adding an A# to the C-Sharp 7 harmony. Example 4.8 shows the differences with the orchestral manuscript, where the sixth of the dominant seventh chord is added in measure 73, but not in measure 69. The resulting conclusion from this inconsistency is that each pianist should determine whether to add the sixth to the dominant chord or not, but whatever procedure is decided should be followed on both instances.

Example 4.8 Inconsistencies in the orchestral manuscript, “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 68-69 and 72-73



Thus, while this reduction is a valuable asset when performing the concerto with two pianos, the numerous discrepancies with regard to the orchestral manuscript (examples of which are listed above) should be diligently compared to that source in order to achieve a better understanding of the score.

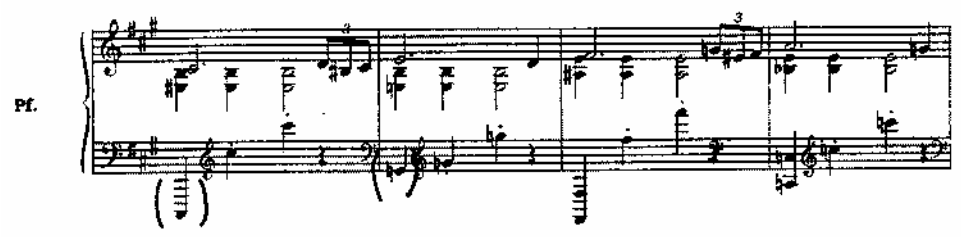
4.2 Performance Considerations

Chapter 3 described the 1939 review in which critic Adolfo Salazar suggests that the *Concierto Romántico* is an ideal vehicle for young Mexican pianists to enter their life as performers. While Salazar's comments can be interpreted in the sense that the concerto is not a lengthy work which makes the exceeding technical demands of other Romantic concertos (for example those of Tchaikovsky, Brahms, or Rachmaninoff), the concerto is by all means a capital work that requires a well developed technical apparatus in addition to highly interpretative depth from the soloist. Technically speaking, the soloist must especially have particularly solid chordal playing and endurance to play multiple octave passages (the pianistic device featured the most during the concerto). The pianist should also have dexterous finger work and the ability to play notes at extremely rapid tempos. Interpretatively, the concerto requires a performer with a refined sense of *rubato* and a subtle ear for color changes.

As mentioned earlier, Carlos Vázquez offers his own personal performance suggestions in the orchestral manuscript. These are the product of a distinct musical mind and his ideas are generally persuasive. While it would be unnecessary to include his recommendations in this study, anyone studying the concerto should consult his advice, which as noted earlier, is at times derived from an assimilation of Ponce's own recording of the work.

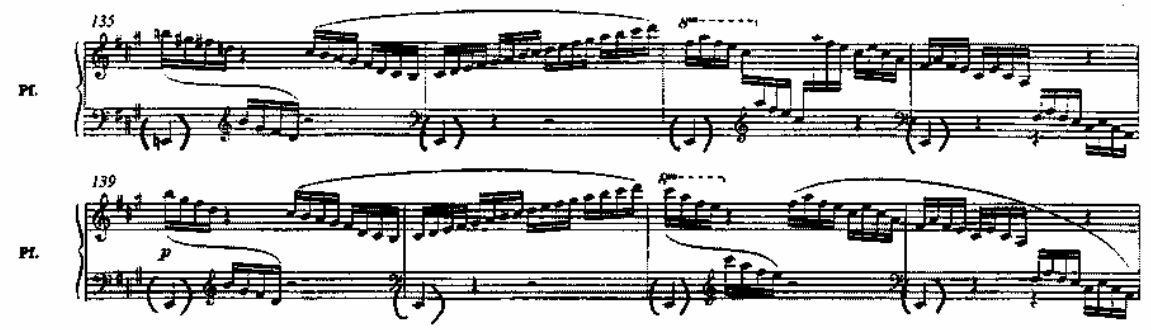
In terms of performance considerations, one of the weaker areas found in the piano writing seems to be the occasional thin texture of left hand bass notes. An example of this occurs in the passage comprising measures 60-67 in the "Allegro Appassionato". The downbeats of the first two measures present a single note, while those of the following six measures (despite a decrease in dynamics for the second half of the phrase) have octaves. In this regard, the doubling of the downbeats in measures 60-61 is recommended (Example 4.9):

Example 4.9. Suggested doubling in the piano's left hand part, "Allegro Appassionato," mm. 60-63



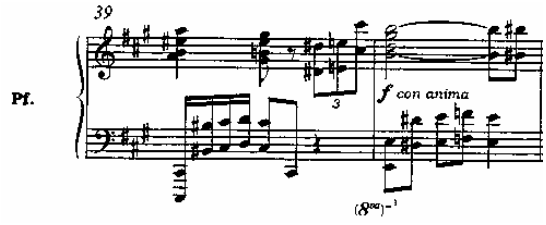
Another place where octave doublings could be applied is the passage consisting of an eight measure left hand E pedal tone in measures 135-142 of the "Allegro Appassionato" (Example 4.10):

Example 4.10. Suggested doubling in the piano's left hand part (E pedal tone), "Allegro Appassionato," mm. 135-142



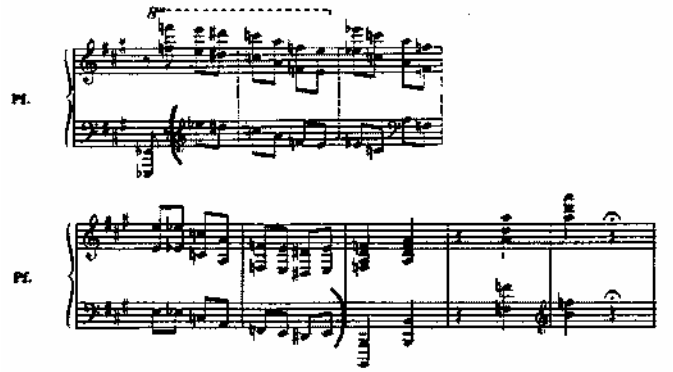
While not exactly a doubling, in measure 40 of the "Andantino Amoroso" the left hand octave E's could be played an octave lower for a more powerful effect (an indication that actually appears in the two piano reduction but not in the orchestral manuscript), as illustrated in Example 4.11:

Example 4.11. Suggested lower octave in the downbeat, “Andantino Amoroso,” m. 40



A similar case occurs in the fortissimo buildup towards the end of the “Allegro” finale. Beginning in measure 288, the texture seems rather thin considering the climax that is about to occur. As such, it is suggested that the left hand in measures 288-292 also plays octaves (Example 4.12):

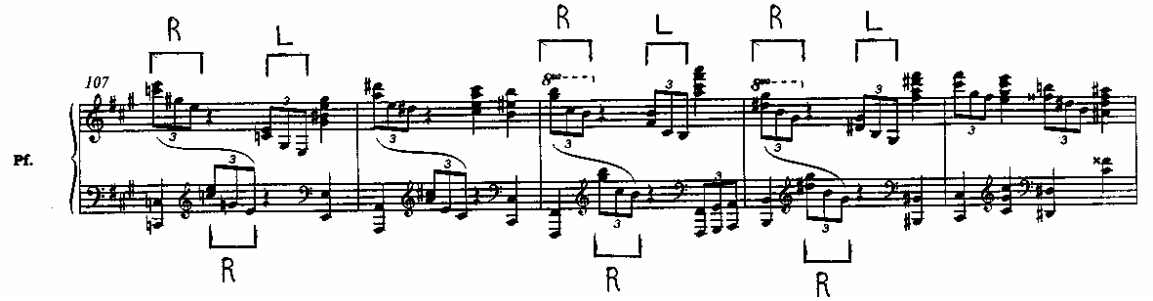
Example 4.12. Suggested doubling in the piano’s left hand part descent, “Allegro,” mm. 288-294



Other performance considerations include the simplifying of passages through redistribution of the hands. Two examples can be especially useful to illustrate. The passage in measures 105-118 of the “Allegro Appassionato” is particularly uncomfortable for the pianist. Measures 107, 109, and 110 are especially strenuous if the original hand distribution written by Ponce is followed, resulting in extensive jumps in the right hand which considerably decrease the probability of accuracy.

A redistribution of the triplet figurations makes the passage more manageable, as shown in Example 4.13:

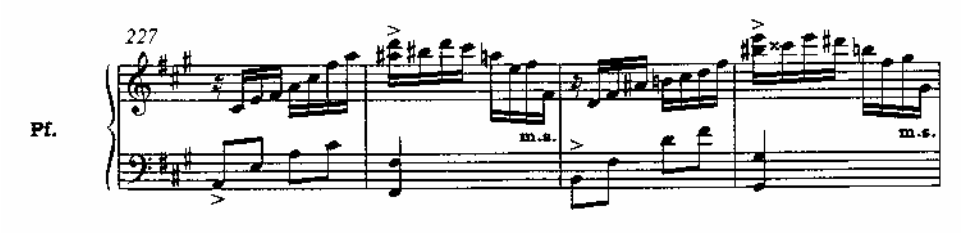
Example 4.13 Redistribution of Triplet Figurations, “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 107-110



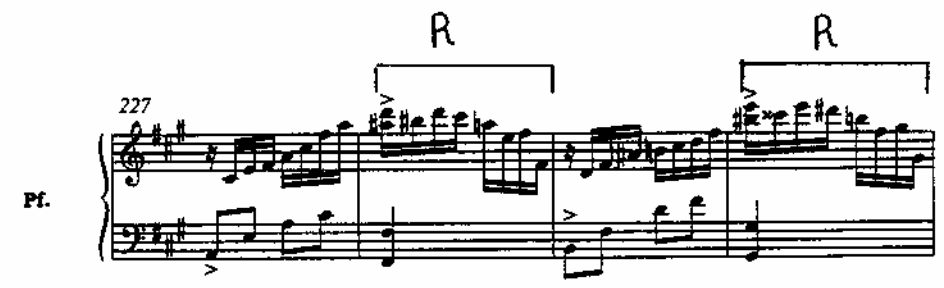
The same procedure can be followed for measure 137, 140, and 144 in the “Allegro come prima” (the figuration in bar 139 is not equivalent to that of the previous passage and therefore does not require an adjustment).

Another place where reconsideration of the score’s indications might facilitate the execution is found in measures 228 and 230 of the “Allegro”. While the nature of the proposed hand distribution is rather ambiguous, the score seems to imply that the last two notes of these measures should be taken with the left hand (Example 4.14a). This suggestion remains consistent throughout the passage, with similar advice appearing in measures 232-236. For these last five measures, taking the last two notes of each measure with the left hand seems appropriate, as the ensuing jump leads to an octave. However, the jump after measures 228 and 230 is followed by a single left hand note, making precision difficult to attain. For these two measures, it is recommended that all of the sixteenth notes in the measure are taken with the right hand, as shown in Example 4.14b:

Example 4.14a. Original suggestion of hand distribution, “Allegro,” mm.227-230



Example 4.14b. Suggested Redistribution of Sixteenth notes, “Allegro,” mm.227-230



It should be noted that these performance suggestions represent the opinion of one individual performer, and should thus be taken merely as a valid point of view for those that find them helpful.

In terms of the different editions, this study has identified basic problems found in each of the three sources consulted and offered certain solutions, as well as illustrated and corrected the errors that can be readily observed. Nonetheless, until a profound revision of the Peer printed edition is undertaken, the performer or scholar of the work should consult both the current version and the existing manuscripts, thoroughly researching them in order to reach a consensus of Ponce’s compositional intent.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE *CONCIERTO ROMÁNTICO*

5.1 Critical Summary of Analytical Resources

As described in Chapter 3 of this treatise, two of the resources found in the existing Ponce literature examine the *Concierto Romántico* from an analytical perspective. These consist of Pablo Castellanos' concise assessment in his essay *Manuel M. Ponce: Ensayo*, and Joel Almazán Orihuela's article in the Mexican journal *Heterofonía*, which discusses thematic integration in the concerto. The purpose of exploring these resources more in depth is to establish the current state of analytical research and contrast their findings. A critical evaluation of both Castellanos' and Almazán's work will in turn allow a comparison of their conclusions with the discoveries brought forth by this study.

Pablo Castellanos' views are of importance for they not only were the first to offer a more scholarly reading of the concerto, but provided fertile ground for future and more comprehensive analyses of the piece. In fact, Almazán's work derived directly from the basic elements proposed by Castellanos. This treatise will attempt to complement both of these authors' findings and rectify some opinions that based on the current analysis prove to be inaccurate.

Castellanos devotes about one page of his *Essay* to the concerto. As a pianist and student of Ponce, his obvious interest in the work can be readily observed. He offers not only commentary on the origin of themes and their treatment, but also proposes the overall design of the work's form. Because of the implied ground-breaking role of these

analytic remarks, a comprehensive depiction of Castellanos' observations bears inclusion in this study:

> Following Liszt's compositional procedures, the four movements of the *Concierto* are interconnected, forming a single movement in 'sonata' form. The initial *allegro*, of vigorous character, represents an exposition's first theme; the *andante*, of Romantic expression, becomes the second theme of the sonata; and the third movement, which takes the place of a *scherzo*, ends the exposition. Since each theme develops in its respective movement, Ponce suppresses the development section (of sonata form), and it is primarily in the piano cadenza where the themes' recapitulation occurs. The fourth movement constitutes an extensive coda. Also related to Liszt's "cyclical principles," Ponce generates the themes of each movement, apparently different from each other, from the rhythmic and melodic transformations contained in the initial motive, recurring to procedures of inversion (in the third movement) and through octave leaps in the final *allegro*. The first theme, which appears to evoke Liszt's Sonata in B Minor, becomes a Mexican Romantic song in the *andantino* and acquires the character of a tropical dance and of subtle rhythm in the *allegretto*."[1]

A closer analysis of Castellanos' interpretation demonstrates they are both extremely revealing in nature and also partially flawed. Castellanos uncovers, through a meticulous investigative process, the close motivic relations that conform each of the concerto's main thematic components. He also identifies the distinct resemblance between the initial theme of Liszt's B Minor Sonata and the head motive of the "Allegro Appassionato" theme (which he refers to simply as '*allegro*'), although in that context he fails to acknowledge the significance of Liszt's work as the main thematic generator for the entire work.

The central problem associated with Castellanos' review, however, is the designation of the concerto as being in 'sonata form.' Castellanos' own admission in regard to the lack of a Development in the movement reduces the likeability of his interpretation, for a section devoted to such musical procedures is an essential component of sonata form. Castellanos also seems to disregard the problematic classification of the "Allegretto" and the ensuing reprise of the material from the "Allegro Appassionato" as a movement. Although Castellanos' comments specifically address the

[1] Castellanos, 31.

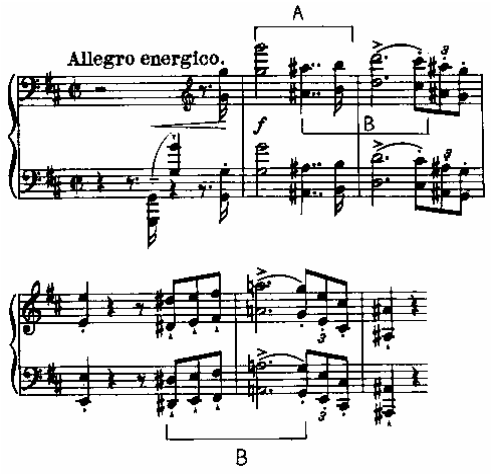
material contained within the “Allegretto” part of the ‘movement,’ he makes no mention whatsoever of the return of the “Allegro come prima” that follows. This is also inconsistent with the overall naming of the movements, for Castellanos’ approach seems to identify every different tempo change as a separate movement. The lack of referral to this reprise is surprising, as it would appear to strengthen the possible notion of sonata form which he is promoting. On the contrary, he sees the would-be Recapitulation as occurring in the solo cadenza. This assertion is incongruous with his previous remarks, for it implies that the cadenza is including themes from three of the work’s movements. Cadenzas in concertos of the Romantic period usually appeared towards the end of a single movement, not in a middle section of a multi-movement work. Finally, the designation of movements as identifying both parts of sonata-allegro form and the general four-movement structure found in sonatas is confusing (for example ‘Exposition’ and ‘Scherzo’). The inaccuracy of Castellanos’ views could stem directly from his acknowledgment of the overt Lisztian influence that pervades the work. Both of Liszt’s piano concertos are in short interconnected movements, a determining factor that might have led Castellanos to identify the *Concierto Romántico* as possessing that same structure.

Tonality is another aspect that seems to contradict the ‘sonata form’ designation. Following traditional standards of such form would imply that the concerto would have to end in the beginning tonic key, F-Sharp Minor (or for that case F-Sharp Major). The concerto’s ending in A Major strikingly disproves Castellanos’ hypothesis. Also unusual is his consideration of the last movement as a *Coda*, and the failure to mention the return of the “Andantino Amoroso” theme at the end of this movement. It seems rather inappropriate for a complete movement to qualify as a *Coda*, especially when that movement has both a *Coda* and a *Codetta* of its own, as will be later seen.

The main notion gathered from Castellanos' proposed analysis is that the work's form is extremely unusual, unique, and unable to fit any standard musical label. Castellanos' attempt to establish sonata form characteristics into the work leads to conclusions that are highly unconvincing. This nonetheless is not in denial of the fact that the work does contain certain elements found in sonata-allegro form, like thematic recurrence. As for this treatise, a consequent analysis of each of the work's sections will attempt to offer insight into the possible design of the concerto. Despite Castellanos' improbable depiction of the work's form, his essential discovery of the concerto's thematic origins deriving from Liszt's Sonata in B Minor should be credited. Castellanos' own musical illustrations of this theory are illuminating, and are presented below in Example 5.1:

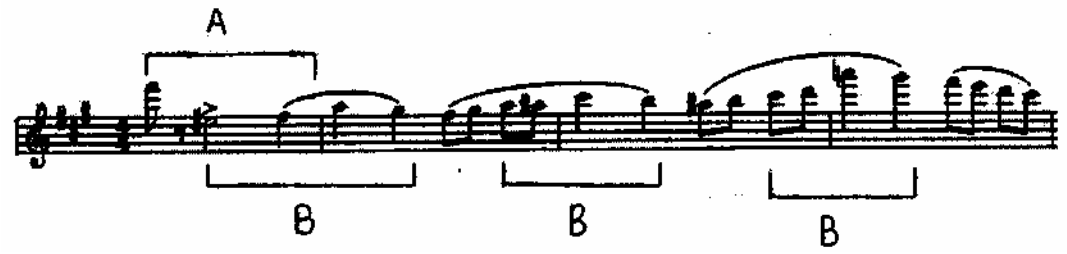
Example 5.1. Castellanos' illustrations of Liszt's B Minor Sonata applied to the *Concierto Romántico*

Liszt Sonata in B Minor

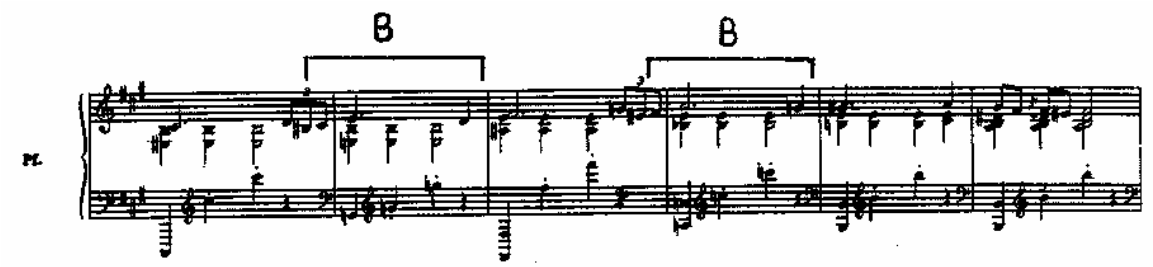


Ponce's *Concierto Romántico*

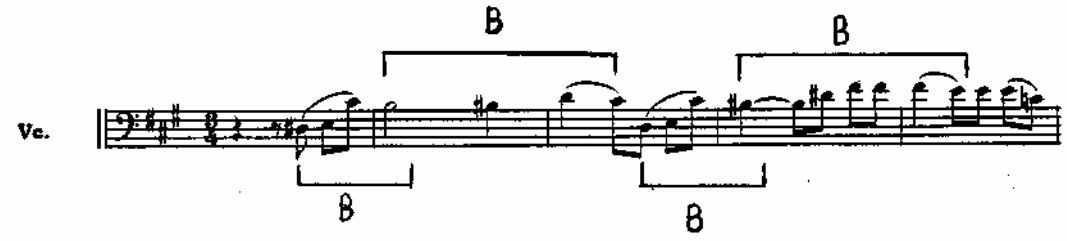
"Allegro Appassionato" (A Section- Main theme- Orchestra)



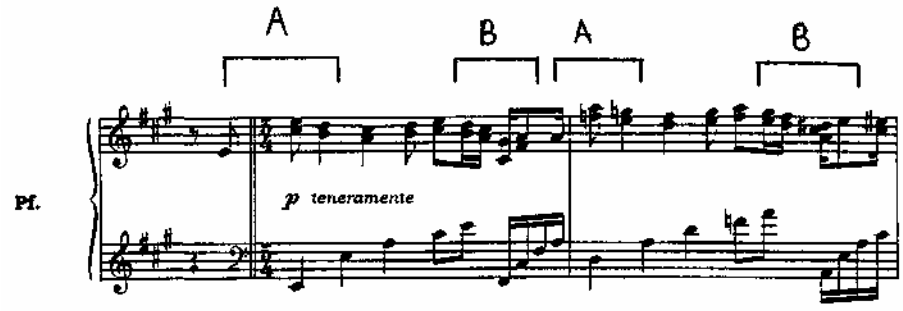
"Allegro Appassionato" (B Section- motive 1- Piano's top melody)



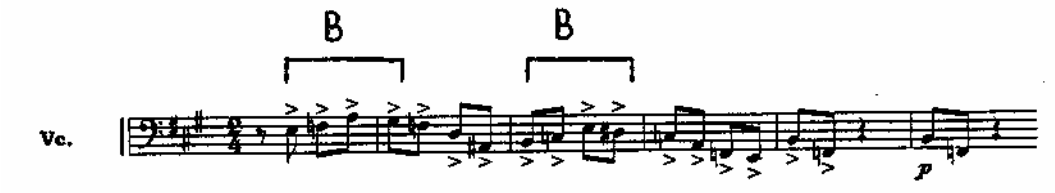
"Andantino Amoroso" (C Section- Orchestra)



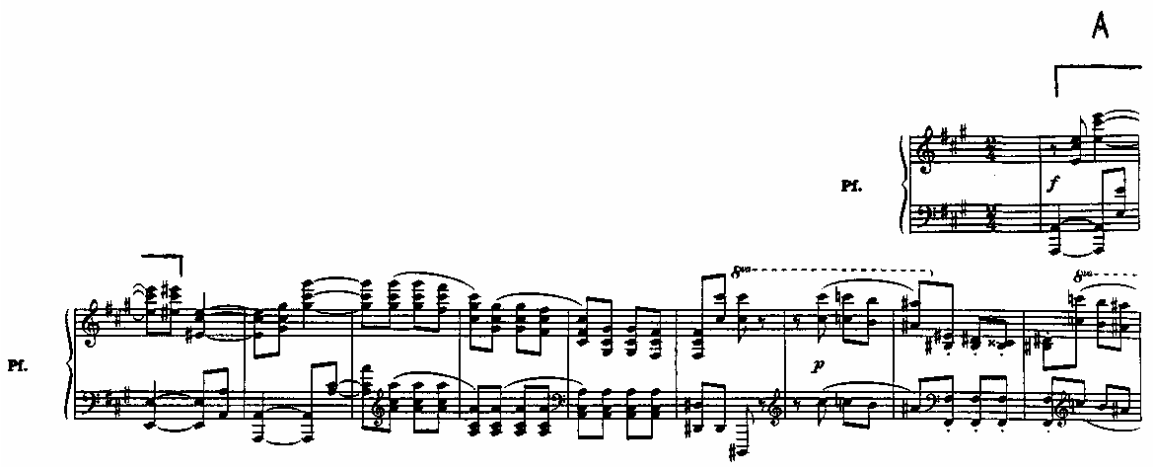
"Allegretto" (D Section- Piano- motivic inversion)



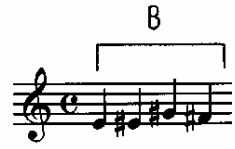
“Allegro” (Orchestral Introduction)



“Allegro” (Theme ‘a’- Piano)



“Allegro” (Theme ‘a’- Piano [without octave jumps])



As mentioned earlier, Castellanos’ remarks left an open possibility for more thorough research in regard to the concerto’s thematic integration. This work was carried out by Joel Almazán Orihuela, who extensively explores this interesting facet of the piece in his *Heterofonía* article. Almazán’s analysis is based on the theoretical application of Arnold Schoenberg’s (1874-1951) principle of *developing variation*. This concept, Almazán notes, was employed by late Romantic authors to solve the “constant

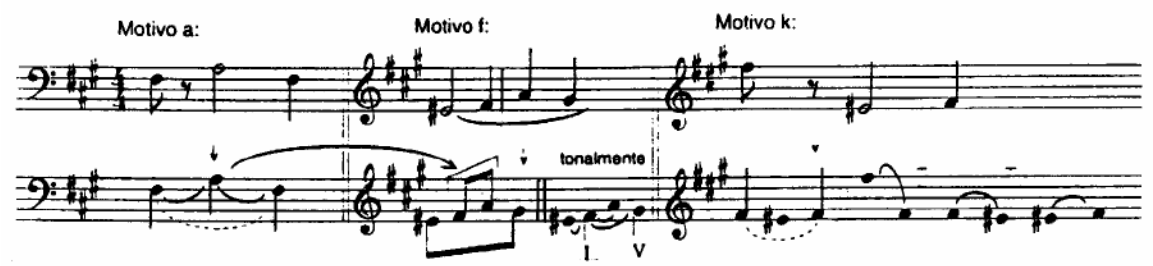
dilemma between unity and variety."[2] While the term was formally coined by Schoenberg, this type of compositional process seems to be in fact a distinct method used by composers throughout the 19th century. Almazán briefly addresses this viewpoint by referring to a book by Walter Frisch titled *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*. In this resource, Frisch traces the principle of *developing variation* to the early 1800s, and further establishes the importance of Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827) as the main promoter of such methods. Frisch includes commentary by Theodor W. Adorno, who he describes as "one of the first and most forceful commentators to claim a role for *developing variation* in the larger dimension."[3] Adorno's opinions, quoted by Frisch from the book *Philosophy of Modern Music*, illustrate the essential change undertaken by Beethoven and the emergence of *developing variation* in a paragraph entitled "Totale Durchführung" [Total Development]: "the tendency of continuous variation is manifested strongly by Beethoven, then by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897). Whereas before Beethoven, conventional form had governed the thematic material, with Beethoven, the development—subjective reflection upon the theme which decides the fate of the theme—becomes the focal point of the entire form."[4] It is likely that Ponce's studies in Europe brought him close to the music of both Beethoven and Brahms, and through careful study of their methods he assimilated the concept of *developing variation*, a process he would later adopt during the creation of the *Concierto Romántico*.

Almazán expands on this idea by explaining that Ponce's use of *developing variation* is expressed through processes of "derivation, expansion, and manipulation of thematic materials," which occur "in melodic elements that could not be considered a

[2] Almazán, 119.
[3] Walter Frisch. *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 19.
[4] Theodor W. Adorno. *Philosophy of Modern Music.* Translated by Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury, 1973), 55. Quoted in Frisch, 19.

phrase, or much less a theme."[5] The main components of this process appear in both the melody and the accompaniment in the first two measures of the orchestral exposition, and integrate three basic 'generating cells' (labeled 'a,' 'f,' and 'k' by Almazán), from which all the main thematic elements in the work are derived (Example 5.2):

Example 5.2. Almazán's generating cells

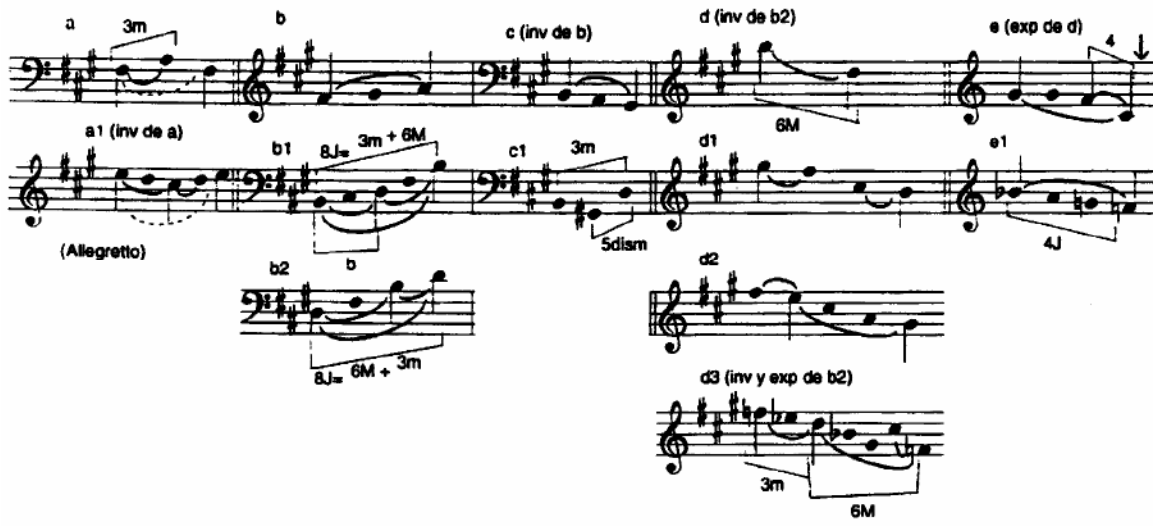


After establishing these important elements, Almazán notes the series of compositional techniques utilized by Ponce in order to achieve 'internal coherence.' These include: "intervallic expansion (when a minor third is increased to a perfect fourth or perfect fifth, for example), thematic expansion (when passing tones, neighboring tones, or *appoggiaturas* are added to a motive), inversion, augmentation and diminution (understood in their traditional contrapuntal connotation), unffolding (horizontal presentation, in various possibilities, of a harmonic interval), motivic addition, intervallic contraction, and the combinations of these processes."[6] These procedures, Almazán contends, "generate a series of groups of melodic motives that constitute the nucleus of themes, episodes and cadenzas of the diverse movements,"[7] shown in Example 5.3:

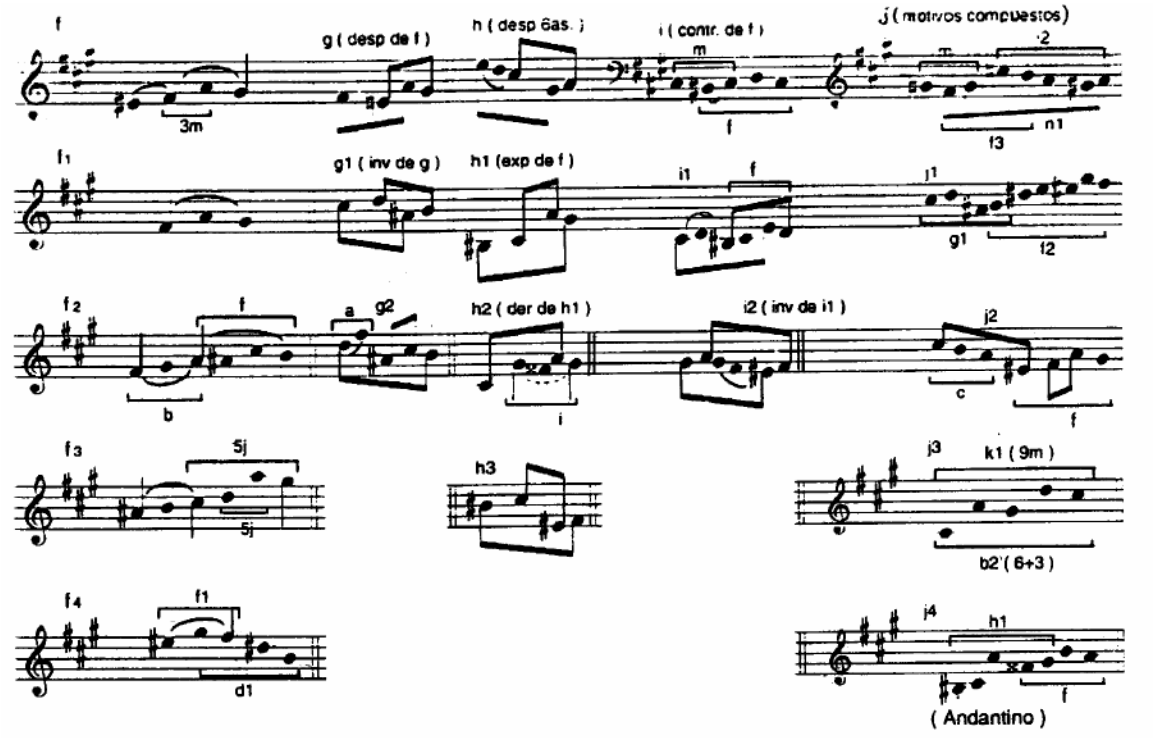
[5] Almazán, 120.
[6] Ibid., 122.
[7] Ibid., 123.

Example 5.3. Motives derived from the ‘a,’ ‘f,’ and ‘k’ generating cells

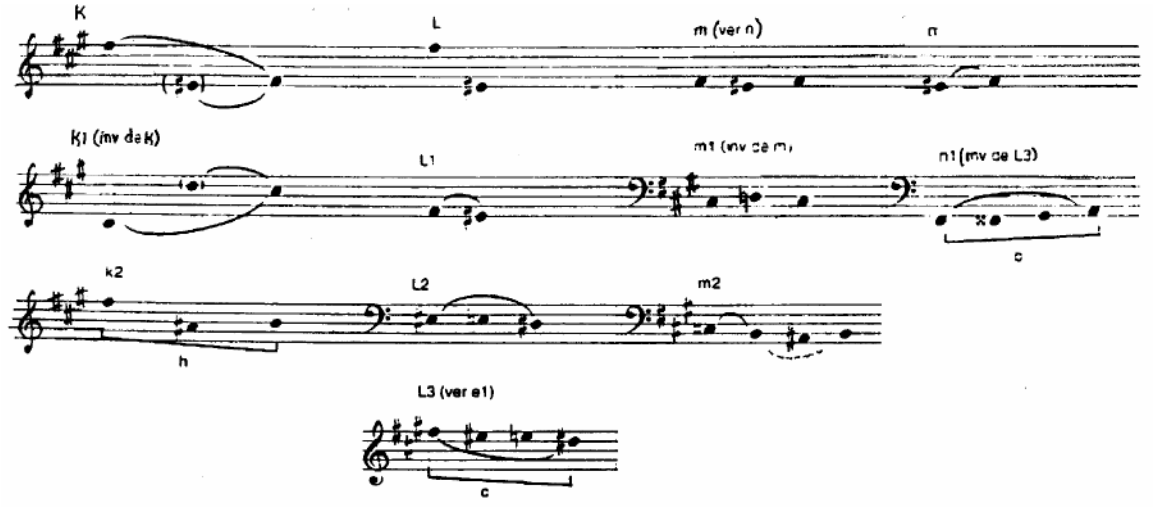
Motives derived from the ‘a’ generating cell



Motives derived from the ‘f’ generating cell



Motives derived from the ‘k’ generating cell



Almazán also alludes to the previous description of *developing variation* by noting that, despite Liszt’s influence in the overall cyclic nature of the work, the variational procedures used by Ponce are in fact closer to Brahms. He differentiates Ponce’s and Liszt’s methods by stating that “(1) Liszt usually uses secondary texture materials that are incorporated to the theme, and not the theme itself as principle of its transformation, and (2) the transformation in Liszt does not occur primarily at a motivic level, but rather in phrases or themes.”[8]

Almazán’s article is an accomplished study that profoundly sheds light into the intricate inner workings of Ponce’s composition. In regard to his thematic integration theory, he assembles massive bodies of evidence through a series of convincing charts, graphs, and musical examples whose findings seem to be conclusive. Despite the definite nature of Almazán’s results in terms of thematic integration, some of his assertions in regard to the work’s form are intriguing. While Almazán is correct to identify the sections labeled “Allegro Appassionato,” “Andantino Amoroso,” “Allegretto”, and “Allegro come Prima” as forming one movement (thus contradicting the early posture of Pablo Castellanos), he tries to apply the principle of *developing variation* to the overall

[8] Ibid., 125.

form of the movement. This appears to be inconsistent with his previous assertions stating that Ponce's use of *developing variation* occurs at a local melodic level. Therefore, while there is no question that all the themes and sections of the movement have thematic referents that derive from the three 'generating cells' and the resulting series of variations identified by Almazán, the clearly defined large-scale design of each of those sections is easily observable and should be taken into account to determine the overall form of the movement. In this regard, Almazán offers an ambiguous and puzzling designation of the first movement as being a 'hybrid form between variation and rondo' that is formed by a total of twenty-four variations. These are surprisingly encompassed within sonata-allegro form denominations which include an Exposition, a Development, and a Recapitulation that is preceded by two 'false Recapitulations.'[9] Almazán's posture becomes as controversial as Castellanos', both authors identifying the solo cadenza as the place where the so-called Recapitulation occurs. It is unclear why Almazán would label the "Allegro come Prima" as a false Recapitulation. He seems to overlook the fact that tonally, this section provides closure by moving into the initial tonic key of the movement (F-sharp Minor) by way of an elided cadence that prompts the return of the main theme of the "Allegro Appassionato" in measure 150.

A proposed descriptive analysis that considers the well-defined nature of each section, as well as the harmonic and stylistic implications of the entire work will be carried out below.

[9] Ibid., 130-133.

5.2 Analytical and Stylistic Study

5.2.1 Introduction

As a result of the analytic and stylistic study conducted (the processes of which will be carried out in the next sections), the proposed structure of the work can be described as being comprised of two movements that follow each other without interruption, essentially creating a 'one movement' concerto. The first movement is the largest, and ends with a solo cadenza. The finale, which begins *attacca* after the cadenza, is rather short compared to the first movement and provides a concise but satisfying conclusion to the work. The stylistic models par-excellence of the *Concierto Romántico*, as stated above, are Franz Liszt's two piano concertos, works which are also divided in several movements that follow one another without interruption. In this regard, it should be noted that Liszt was not the first composer to use the one-movement concerto form. In fact, his design could have been influenced by Ignaz Moscheles' Concerto No.6, Op. 90, as well as Carl Maria von Weber's *Konzertstück* and Felix Mendelssohn's *Capriccio Brilliant*. The processes of thematic metamorphosis employed by Liszt in his concertos, in turn, seem to be derived from Franz Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasie*, a favorite work of his which he even arranged for piano and orchestra.[10]

While these factors create a pre-Lisztian series of influences that were to a certain degree inherited by the *Concierto Romántico*, Ponce's desire to create a work of symphonic scope is directly related to the compositional aspirations found in Liszt's Piano Concerto in A Major. These entail the increased importance of the orchestra in the sense that the soloist does not dominate the presentation or development of thematic material. In his book *Musical Thoughts and Afterthoughts*, pianist Alfred Brendel comments on the Liszt A Major concerto, and the contents of his remarks seem to also

[10] Anna Celenza. "Liszt's piano concerti: a lost tradition" in *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt,* Ed. Kenneth Hamilton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 160.

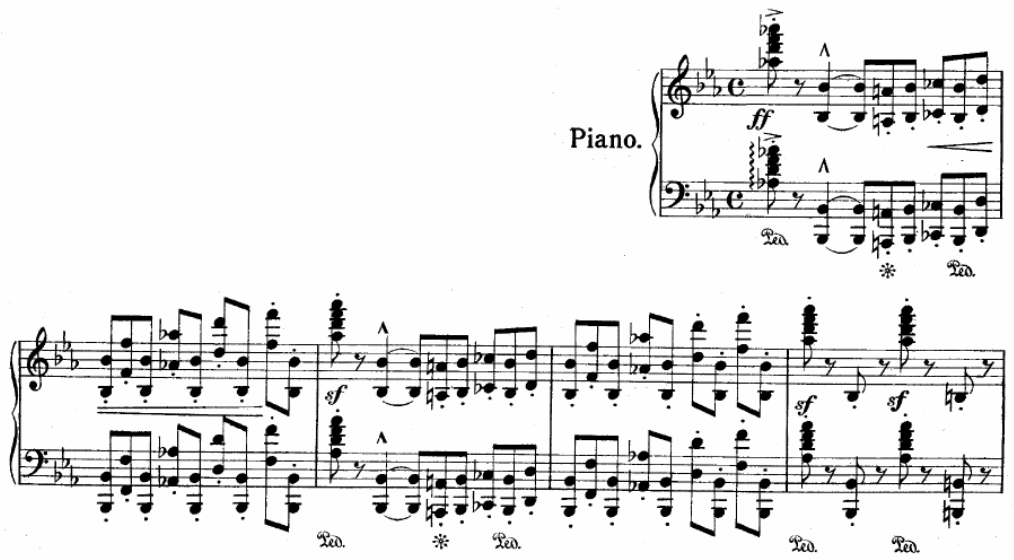
apply strongly to the *Concierto Romántico*. Brendel notes that "there is a fragmentary openness to the form that gives the work as a whole a poetic sense. The various pauses and silences are not envisioned as breaks in the musical flow, but rather transitions in the musical argument. 'Organic unity" gives a structure to the entire work."[11]

5.2.2 The *Concierto Romántico*'s First Movement

5.2.2.1 The A Section ("Allegro Appassionato")

The concerto begins with a rather brief orchestral exposition (mm.1-12) that, without introductory material, presents the main theme of the section (identified as 'A'). The first notes of the orchestral *tutti*, presented in full force, are reminiscent of the rhythmic motion that introduces the piano part at the beginning of Liszt's First Piano Concerto, in E-Flat Major (Example 5.4):

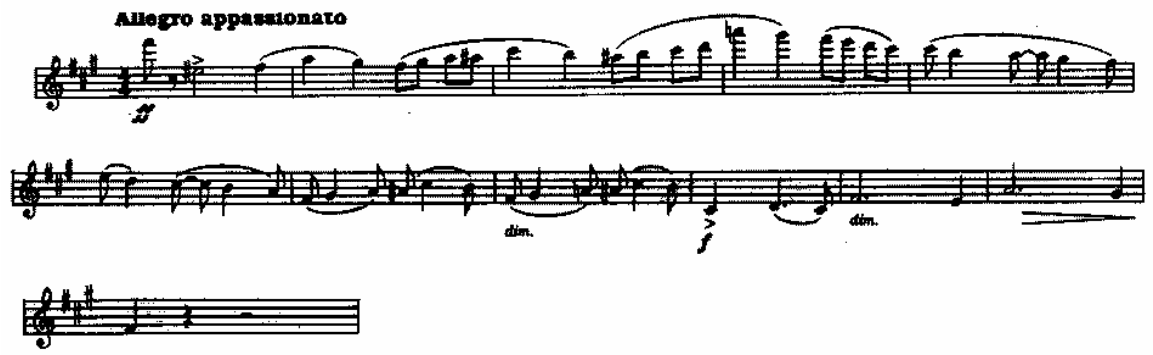
Example 5.4. Piano entrance in Liszt's Piano Concerto in E-Flat Major



[11] Alfred Brendel. *Musical Thoughts and Afterthoughts* (London: Robson Books, 1976), 79-80. Quoted in Celenza, 161.

The subtle similarity to Liszt's work can be seen both in the long accented second beat in the first measure of this A theme and the interval of a seventh between the first and second beats (Example 4.5).[12]

Example 5.5. The A Theme, "Allegro Appassionato," mm.1-12

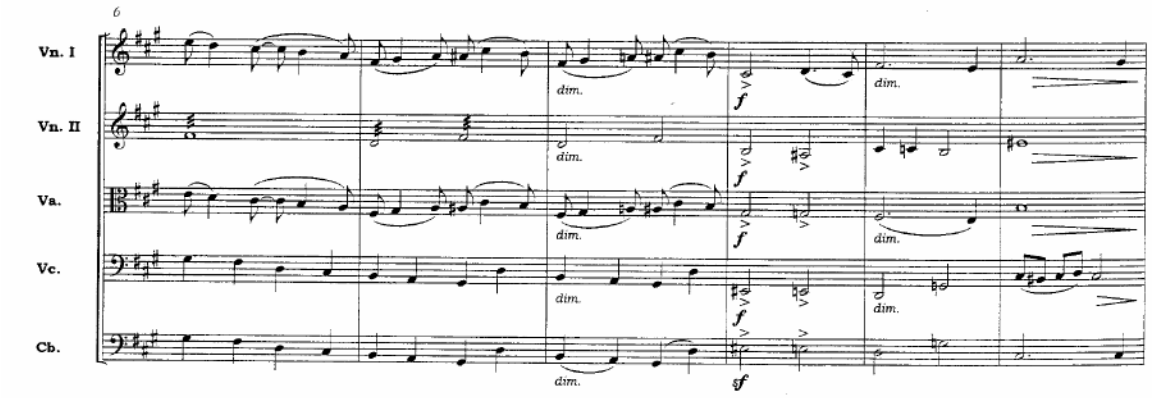


The theme, which appears initially in the flute and first violin, can be described as follows: It begins with a descending minor ninth from an F-Sharp eighth note to an E-Sharp dotted quarter. This leads to a motive comprised of eighth notes and quarter notes which forms a two measure and a half ascending sequence. While the first two repetitions of the sequence use only intervals of seconds and thirds, the last repetition introduces a leap of a fifth (D to A) and becomes the highest point of the phrase. The arrival to this melodic goal and heightening of tension is further reinforced by the harmony, which presents a G-sharp half-diminished chord that creates dissonance between the B in the accompaniment and the suspension from A to G-Sharp that resolves in the melody. The early climax of this twelve measure phrase leads to an essentially descending motion for the following eight measures, where melodic and harmonic interest is kept primarily through the use of syncopation. The melody itself is not very complex, being formed by a descending series of ten steps from C-Sharp to A that outlines the F-Sharp natural minor scale. A minor third leap (A to F-Sharp) leads to

[12] Note the first measure misprint that was described in Chapter 4, p 45.

two repeated measures where syncopation reappears paired with a subdued increase in tension. Finally, the theme ends with four melancholic measures in which dynamic levels decrease by way of a reduced instrumentation. The melodic motion is slowed down by the use of longer note values and the harmonic rhythm is expanded from quarter notes to half notes. Harmonically, this thematic presentation is tonally stable in F-Sharp Minor as mainly diatonic chords in that key are used, with the exception of the V7/Neapolitan going to the Neapolitan in measure 10 (Example 5.6):

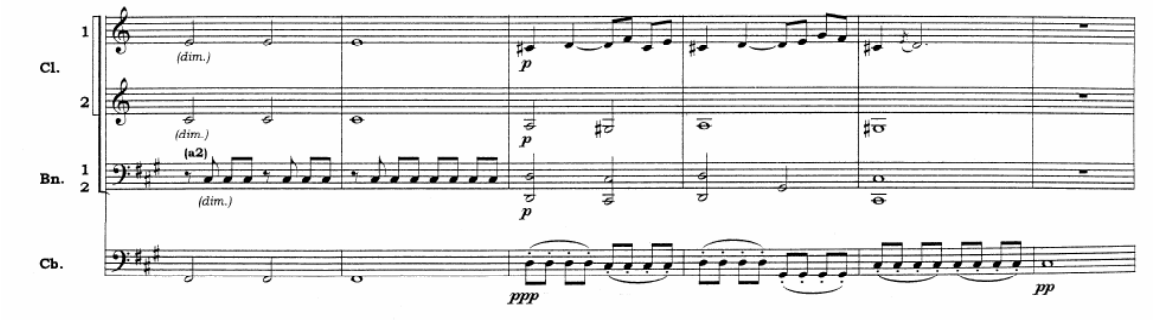
Example 5.6. “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 6-10



A fifteen measure expressive transition (mm.13-27) follows. The first four bars, played only by the strings, are somewhat reminiscent of the main theme: the melody (again in the first violins), also incorporates elements of syncopation and the accompaniment in the cellos is very similar to that presented in the first phrase. This leads to another short *tutti* section in which new transitional material is presented. The shape of this seven measure *tutti* is essentially the same as that of the first phrase: an arch in which the phrase begins soft, peaks, and decreases, although in this occasion the highest point occurs towards the center of the phrase. This time, tension is provided by tremolos in the second violins, violas, cellos and a long timpani trill. After the *tutti*, a four measure phrase closes the transition and the orchestral introduction. Clarinets and

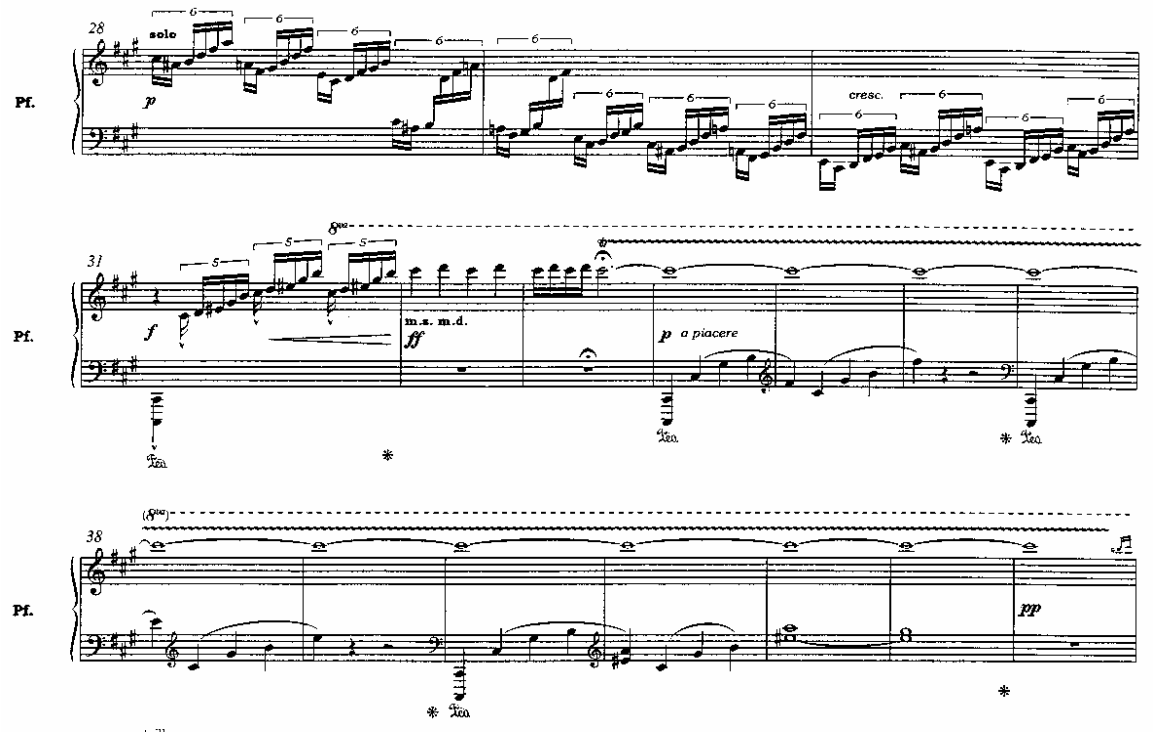
bassoons are featured along with the basses. The first clarinet plays material that rhythmically resembles the main theme, although the motion is more static and has more sense of closure. The basses, clarinets, and bassoons end this concise orchestral exposition on a half-cadence in C-Sharp Major (Example 5.7):

Example 5.7. “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 22-27.



The entrance of the solo piano follows, and unlike that of the orchestra, it does present introductory material (identified as Introduction, mm. 28-45). This is in the form of cascading sixteenth-note sextuplets in crescendo that descend for three measures and reach a low C-Sharp (Example 5.8):

Example 5.8. Piano's introductory material, "Allegro Appassionato," mm. 28-44



These sextuplets are of interest because they are suggestive of both F-Sharp Minor and A Major. This is noteworthy because as mentioned earlier, the concerto begins in F-Sharp Minor and ends in A Major. When a difference like this occurs, it is essential to determine the harmonic implications established throughout the piece in such a way that they can provide an answer as to what is the actual tonic key of the work. These sextuplets outline a G-Sharp Minor half-diminished 9/7 harmony that works as 'ii' in F-sharp Minor and then goes to 'V.' However, the non-harmonic downbeats of each sextuplet delineate an A Major chord (C-sharp, A, E, etc.). Although A Major does not have any harmonic inference at this point in the piece, its subtle appearance provides clues to the ambiguous tonal plan developed by Ponce in order to provide interest through the large-scale design of the work and contrast the otherwise standard harmonic procedures that occur at a more local level. The arrival to the low C-Sharp creates a long pedal note that is maintained for fifteen measures and strengthens the impending arrival

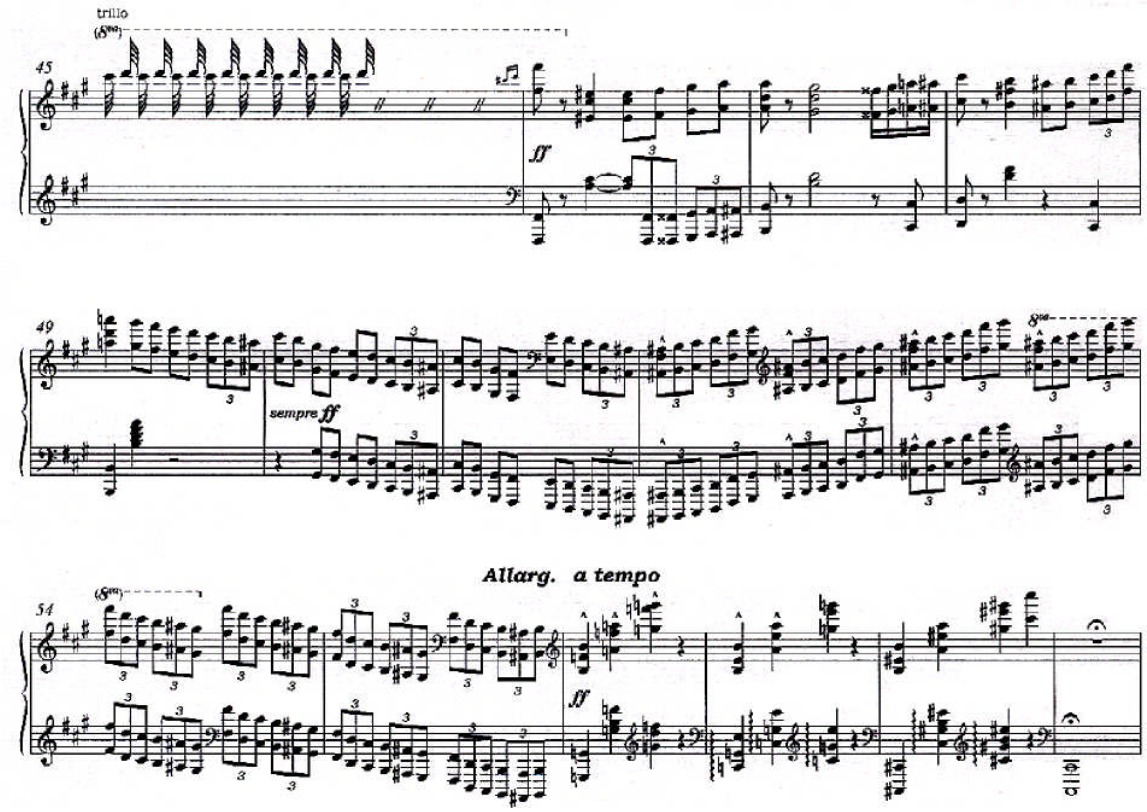
to the tonic F-Sharp. During these fifteen measures, however, a sense of uncertainty and mystery prevails. The right hand introduces a very long trill while the left hand plays three sequences *a piacere*, the endings of which outline the notes F-Sharp , E and E-Sharp (4', Flat 3', and #3'), thus creating suspensions in the V7 chord (see Example 4.8). At this point the right hand trill, which had remained accompanimental and in the background, now crescendoes swiftly to reach the tonic F-Sharp minor and the statement by the piano of the A theme (mm. 46-59).

This solo 'version' however, is not exactly identical to the one previously presented by the orchestra, being more reminiscent of a cadenza than of an actual thematic presentation. To begin with, only the head motive of the main theme is used, as Ponce just includes the first three out of the total twelve measures in the theme. The rhythm is different as well, now having an accented second beat on each of the first three measures. This leads to a seven measure virtuosic display of octaves, a pianistic device exploited extensively throughout the work, as mentioned previously.

A four measure harmonic transition also closes the soloist entrance on a half-cadence (Example 5.9):[13]

[13] Note the misprint (described previously in Chapter 4) in the second measure of this example. In measure 46, beats two to three, the tie in the right hand is missing, although it does appear in the left hand.

Example 5.9. The Piano's cadenza-like presentation of the 'A' Theme, "Allegro Appassionato," mm. 45-59



After this brief exposition by the soloist of cadenza-like characteristics, the A section concludes. A diagram of this section could be represented as follows (Diagram 5.1):

Diagram 5.1. The A section of the "Allegro Appassionato"

Section:	A			
Instrumentation:	Orchestra	Orchestra	Piano	Piano
Theme:	'A' theme	transition	Introduction	'A' theme
Key:	f#	f#	f#	f#
Measure:	1	13	28	46
			Total Number of Measures: 59	

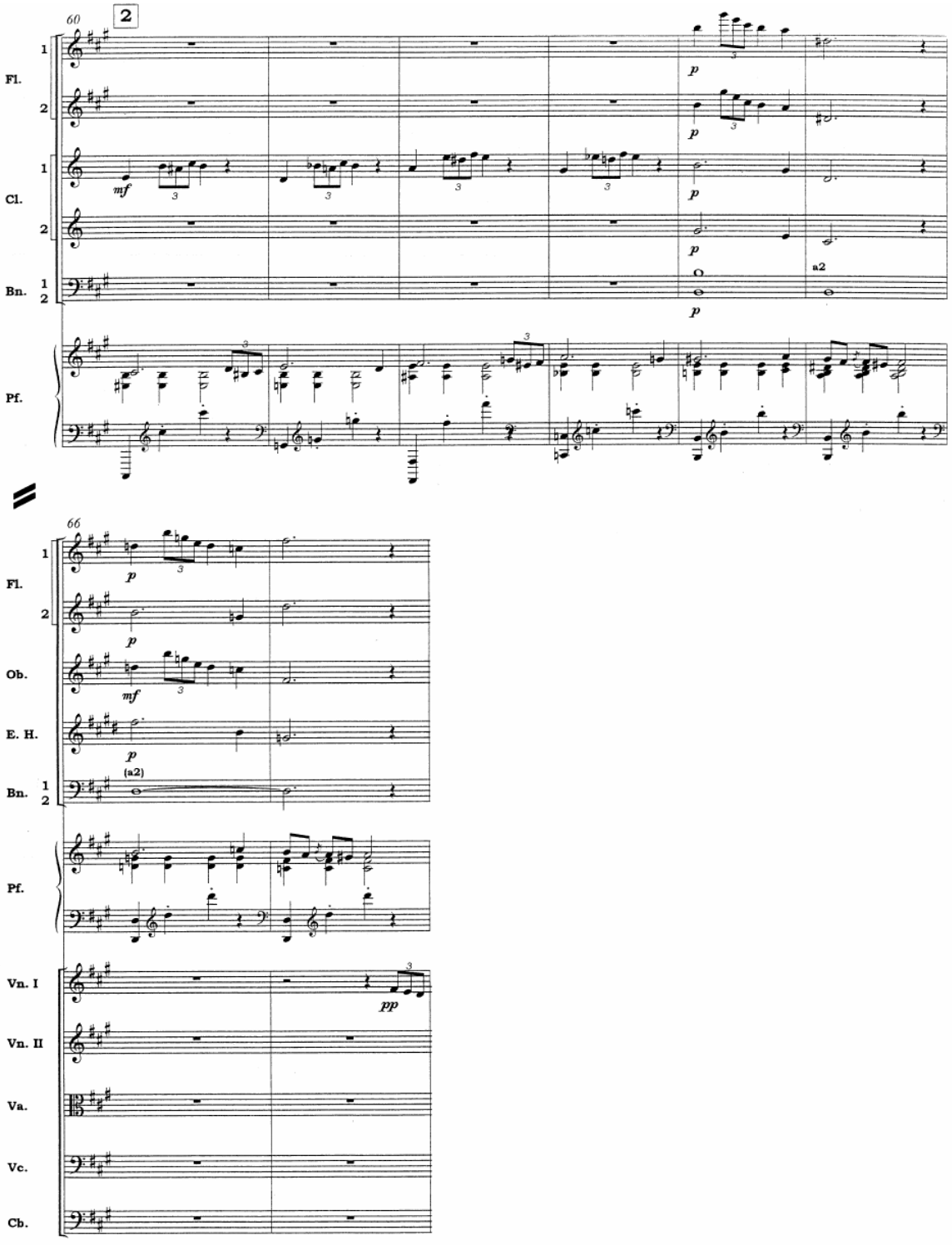
5.2.2.2 The B Section ("Allegro Appassionato")

In this new section, the orchestra and soloist join together for the first time. An actual theme per se is not introduced, like in the A section. In exchange, Ponce presents four

main motivic ideas that appear during the course of the section. Due to the large scope of this section, it is necessary to divide it into four smaller sub-sections which will be identified as ‘b1’, ‘b2’, ‘b3,’and ‘b4.’

The b1 section (mm.60-83) begins without resolving the half cadence that had ended the A section, as the harmony of the first measure also outlines a C-Sharp dominant seventh chord. The initial four measures of the first phrase (mm. 60-64) present a dialogue between the piano and the clarinet. A sequence of the first important motive (identified as m1) in the section occurs (a melodic figure which Castellanos described as a transformation of the ‘A’ theme). The flutes and bassoons join in during the subsequent four measures (mm. 65-68), which seem to evoke idiomatic writing borrowed directly from one of Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsodies. Probably the most interesting contrast between these eight measures is the change of color and tonality- the first four darker and tenser and the last four brighter and more light-hearted (Example 5.10):

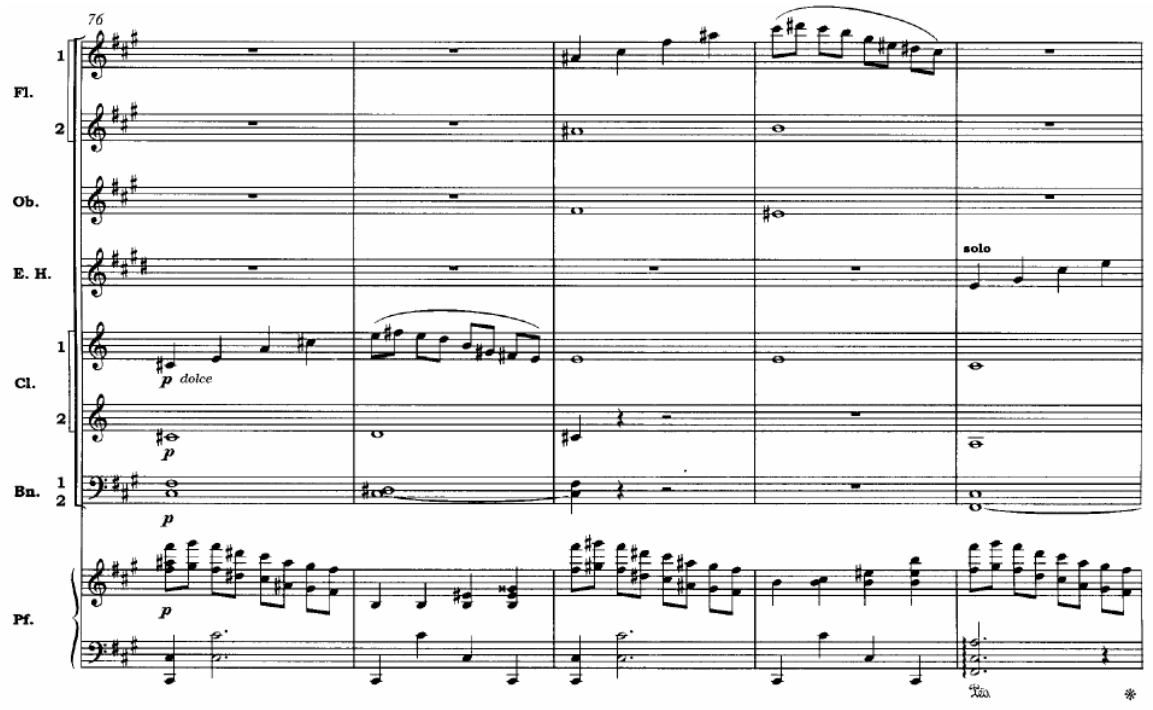
Example 5.10. The m1 motivic idea, “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 60-67



During the next eight measures (mm.68-75), the piano mainly provides support and color through figurations while the strings present a cantabile melody. Again, the

structure presents a four measure idea that is repeated in a different key: the first four measures (mm.68-71) leaning towards a G Major tonal center and the last four (mm. 72-75) towards F-Sharp Major. Following this are four short phrases (two measures each) in which the piano joins another instrument in musical dialogue (mm. 76-83). First, the piano presents a motive of descending eighth notes, the second of the four main motivic ideas of the "B" section (m2), shown in Example 5.11

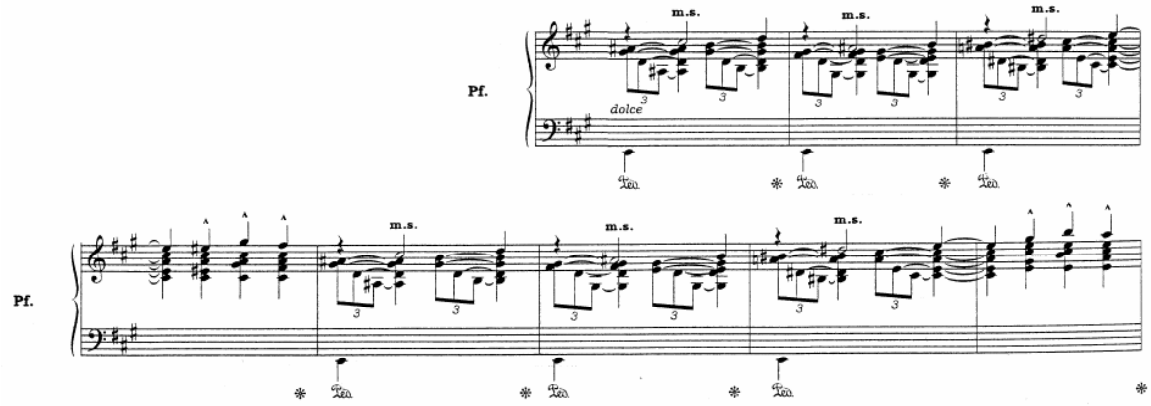
Example 5.11. The m2 motivic idea, "Allegro Appassionato," mm. 76-80



This figure is imitated immediately by the clarinet while the piano provides accompaniment. This same procedure is repeated three more times, but now the soloist alternates with the flute, the English horn and the oboe. The first two occasions, this dialogue is in the more optimistic key of F-Sharp Major, but it returns to the parallel minor for the last two statements.

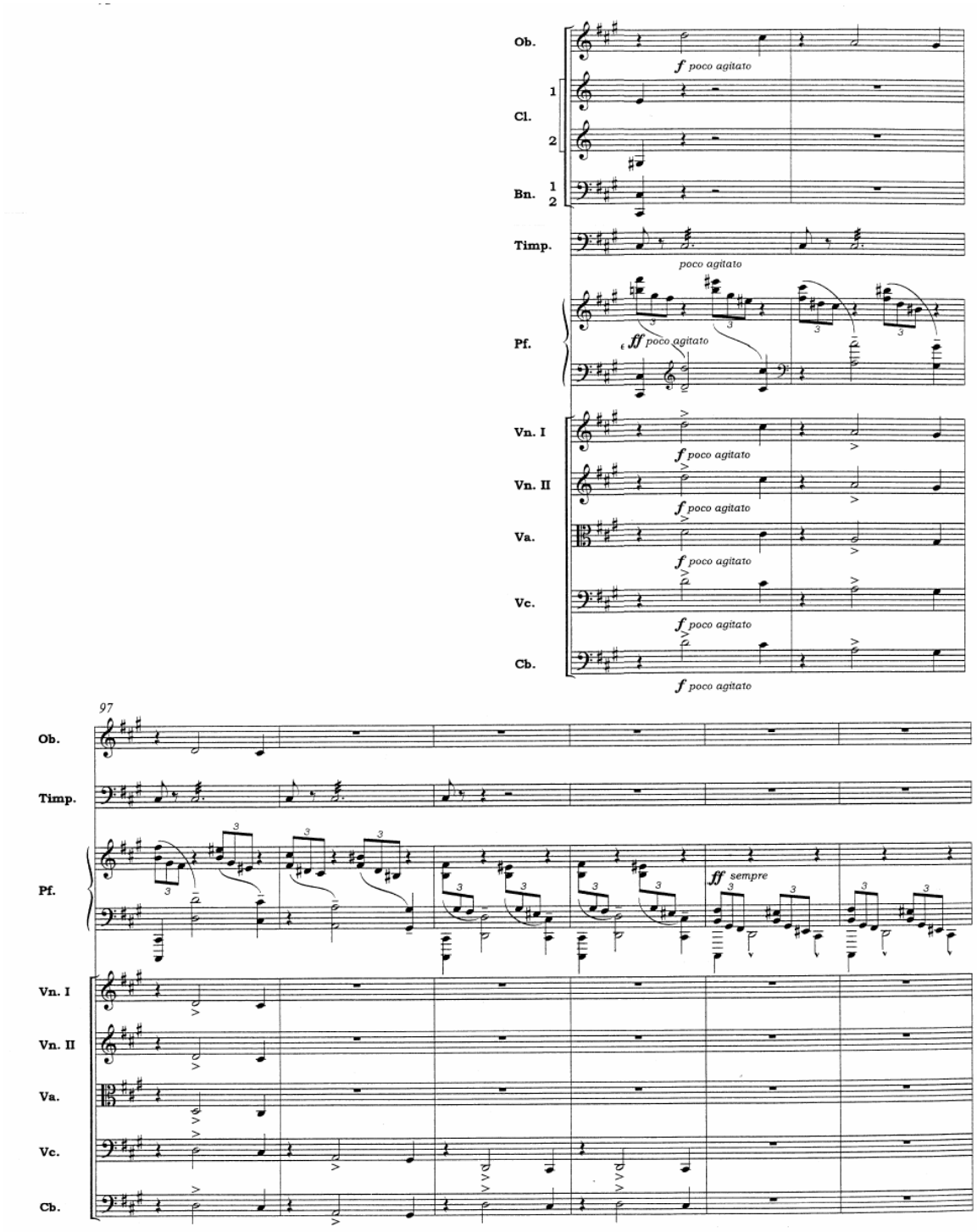
Finishing up this period of little harmonic motion and relative calm in the music, the soloist now presents more active and engaging figurations, in the sub-section labeled b2 (mm. 84-104). This sub-section introduces the third motivic idea of the overall “B” section (m3), presented by the piano (mm. 84-94) in the top melody (Example 5.12):

Example 5.12. The m3 motivic idea, “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 84-91



Despite the increase in motion and passion, Ponce writes *con espressione*, always reminding the soloist of his musically expressive intent throughout the work. Clarinets, bassoons, and the French Horn accompany the piano for the first eleven bars of the passage, and strings and the timpani take over as the music intensifies (mm. 95-102). This occurs with an eight measure descent that alternates every two bars between C-Sharp Dominant Seventh and G-Sharp Seventh harmonies as the orchestral texture provides strong accents in the second beats of each measure (Example 5.13):

Example 5.13. “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 95-102

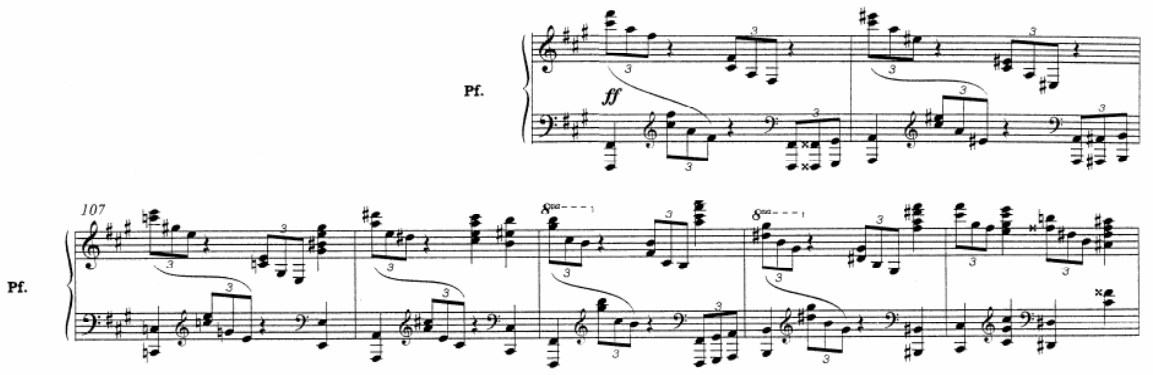


The sub-section closes with figuration reminiscent of the solo introduction (mm.103-104): the outlining of a C-Sharp major harmony that led to the long trill in the right hand. This

time, the trill appears again, but lasts only one measure and crescendoes quickly to reach an F-sharp minor cadence that elides with the next section.

The beginning of the b3 sub-section (mm. 105-126) finds the soloist in *fortissimo* playing a *bravura* passage in which the hands cross each other in arpeggio-like figurations (Example 5.14):

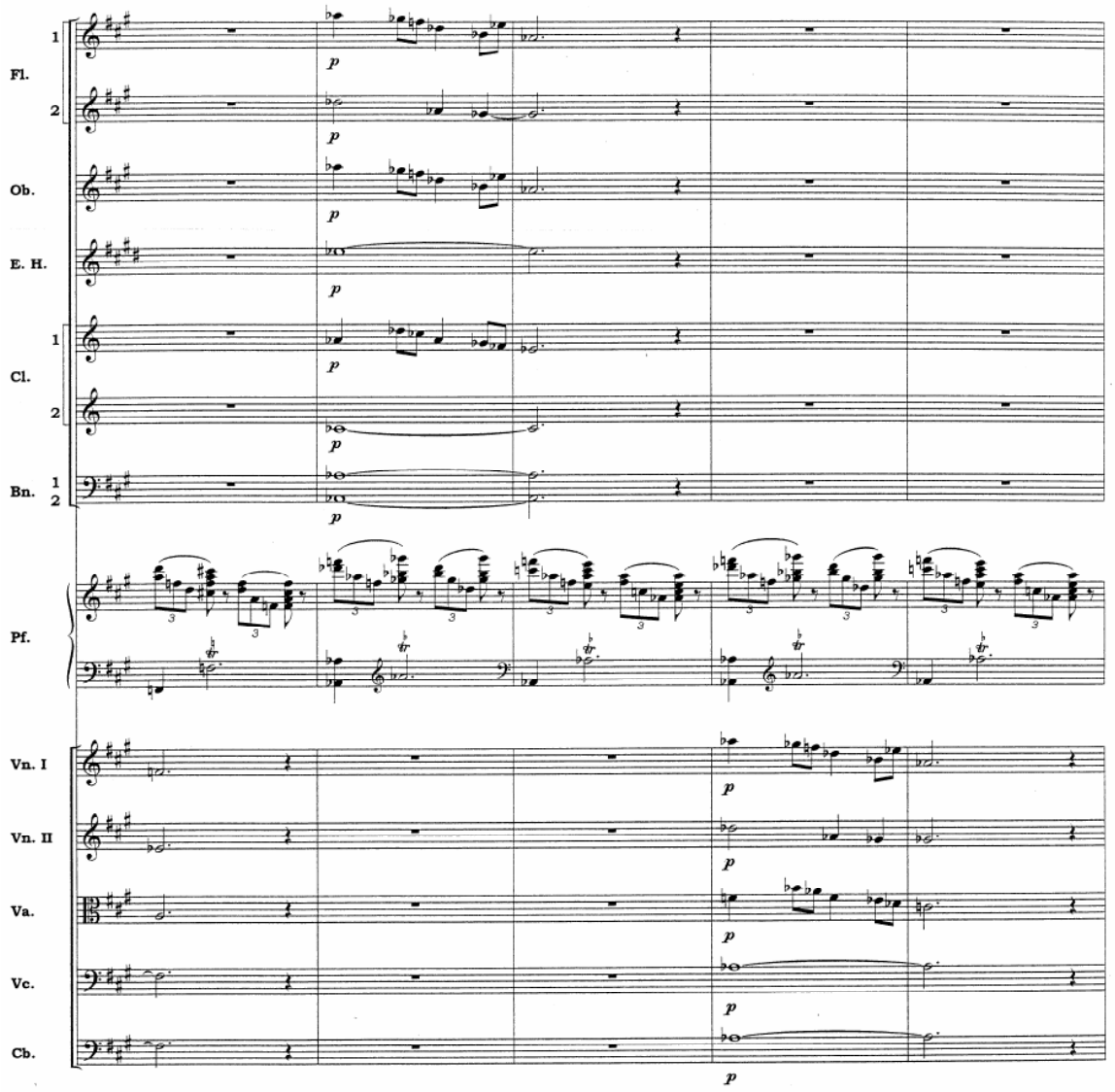
Example 5.14. “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 105-111



The strings accompany the soloist; in particular the cellos and basses are the instruments which provide more support. Structurally, this passage is comprised of two phrases, seven measures each; the first one is in F-Sharp Minor (mm. 105-111) while the second one modulates to G-Sharp minor and restates the arpeggio-like figurations that had begun this sub-section (mm. 112-118). After these fourteen measures, another modulation occurs, now to the distant key of B-Flat Major. There is a decrease in intensity and the woodwinds now join the piano in alternation with the strings (mm. 119-126).

As the b4 sub-section begins, the piano continues with additional triplet figurations that resemble the beginning of b3. However, the figurations are now accompanimental, being secondary in importance to the two-measure phrases in which the woodwinds and strings dialogue (Example 5.15):

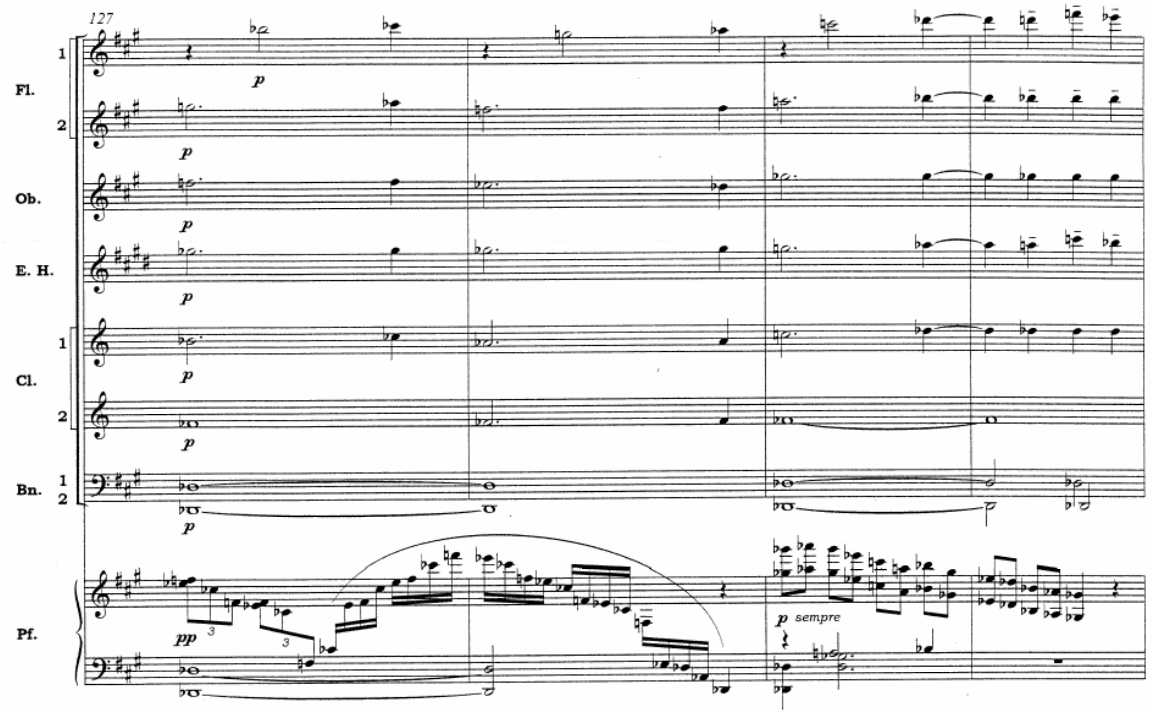
Example 5.15. “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 122-126



This alternation occurs four times (eight measures) and is followed by a four-measure passage that returns to the material presented in b2 (mm.127-130). While the soloist continues with extended figurations, now adding sixteenth notes to the arpeggios, the woodwinds take over the theme that the piano had played in b2. However, Ponce skillfully incorporates into the soloist’s part, for the last two measures, the descending eighths motive that had appeared at the end of the b1 sub-section. This four measure interaction consists of a two bar sustained D-Flat Dominant Seventh chord that in turn

cadences to G-Flat Major for the last two measures of the phrase (mm. 127-131). This apparently unusual harmony is simply an enharmonic spelling for the parallel major of the tonic key of the section—F-Sharp Minor, a factor that can be explained as relating to the developmental nature of the sub-section (Example 5.16):

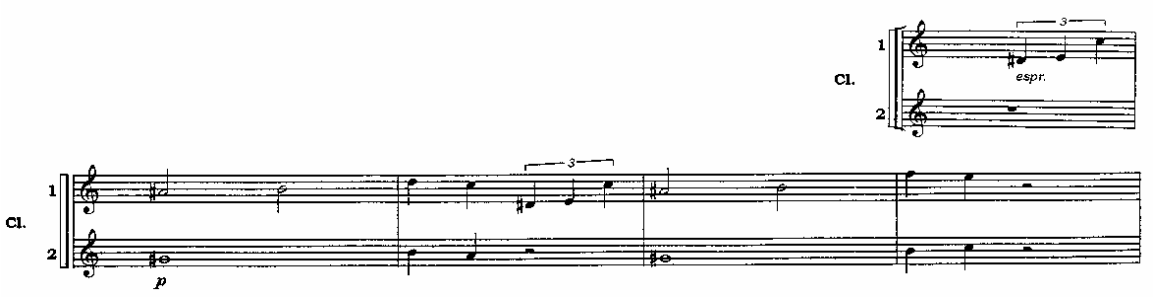
Example 5.16. “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 127-130



An exact repetition of this phrase (mm.131-134) is followed by an extension in which now the strings take over the b2 motive, marked *cantabile* (mm. 135-142). The soloist’ accompanimental figurations change, now immersing into passage-work comprised of continuous and flowing scalar patterns in the right hand while the left hand sustains an E pedal note. This long pedal tone and the two-measure alternation between an E7 harmony and an A Major chord (with an added sixth) obviously appear to indicate that the music is moving into an A Major tonal center. However, the music instead moves to an A Augmented chord that is followed by a C-Sharp Dominant Seventh, which predictably cadences in F-Sharp Minor (mm.143-144).

An additional area of this sub-section (mm.146-184), presents new material in which the piano performs rather unpianistic and uncomfortable figurations of sixteenth notes that again seem characteristic of Liszt's piano writing. A new motive (Example 5.17) emerges in the clarinet (m. 150) which is marked *forte*, as well as *cantabile* and *espressivo*. This is the final motivic idea of importance in the 'B' section (m4), although its appearance will carry on into the next section of the work, as will be seen later.

Example 5.17. The m4 motivic idea, "Allegro Appassionato," mm. 84-91



After four measures in which the piano continues the sixteenth-note figurations, the flute and oboe take over the new motive that now becomes more passionate (mm. 154-156). A more extended statement of that motive in the strings occurs at this time (mm.157-168). This leads to the concluding part of the b4 sub-section and the overall 'B' section, as the piano part increases in complexity in what clearly sounds like closing material. The first eight measures of this phrase (mm.169-176) find the piano in taxing and running sixteenth note passage-work that encompasses a considerable area of the keyboard geography while the strings alternate between *pizzicato* and *arco* playing. This is followed by yet another appearance of the new motive in the violins followed two measures later by the flutes (mm. 177-180). This phrase begins *pianissimo* but gradually crescendoes to a huge climax as the orchestral texture thickens (mm.181-184). It reaches a *tutti* as the harmony moves from a C-Sharp Dominant Seventh chord to its expected resolution in F-Sharp Minor as the ending of the "B" section elides with an

orchestral restatement of the “A” section that opened the concerto. A diagram of the B Section and its three sub-sections is shown in Diagram 5.2:

Diagram 5.2. The B Section of the “Allegro Appassionato”

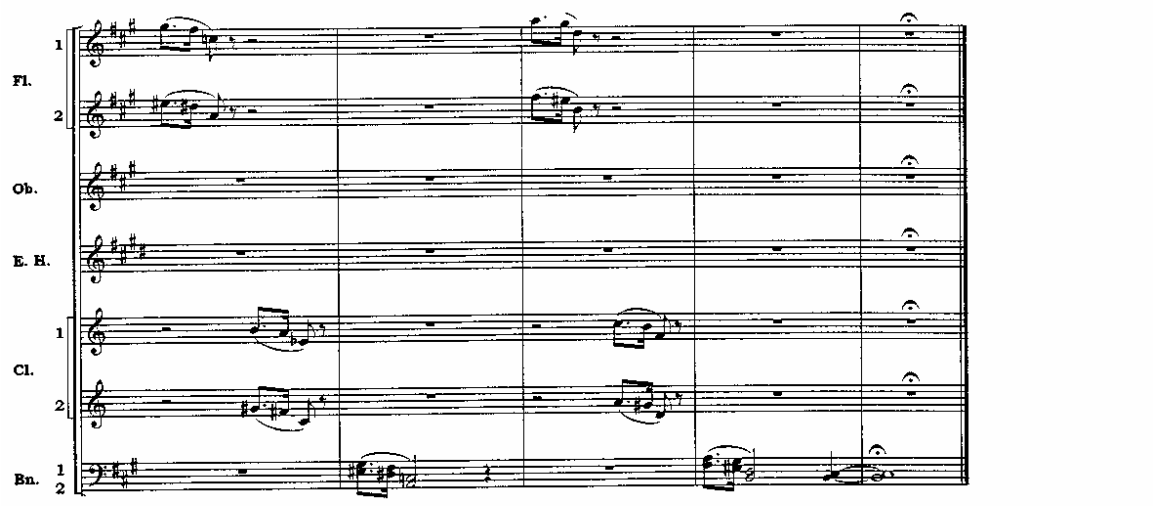
Section:	B		
Sub-Section	b1		
Instrumentation:	Orchestra & Piano	Orchestra & Piano	
Theme:	m1	m2	
Key:	f#	G - F# - f#	
Measure:	60	68	
		Total Number of Measures: 23	
Section:	B		
Sub-Section	b2		
Instrumentation:	Orchestra & Piano	Orchestra & Piano	
Theme:	m3	(m3)	
Key:	A	f#	
Measure:	84	93	
		Total Number of Measures: 17	
Section:	B		
Sub-Section:	b3		
Instrumentation:	Orchestra & Piano	Orchestra & Piano	
Theme:	-	-	
Key:	f# - g#	Bb - Db	
Measure:	105	119	
		Total Number of Measures: 22	
Section:	B		
Sub-Section:	b4		
Instrumentation:	Orchestra & Piano	Orchestra & Piano	Orchestra & Piano
Theme:	m3, m2	m3, m4	m4, closing
Key:	Gb	A - f#	f#
Measure:	127	135	169
		Total Number of Measures: 58	
		Total Number of Measures in “B” section: 120	

5.2.2.3 Restatement of the A Section (“Allegro Appassionato”)

This restatement of A is shorter than the one that was heard at the beginning of the movement. This is possibly due to the overall lengthy size of the original A section.

Since the A theme material has already been heard once in full form, on this occasion only the first eight measures appear exactly the way they had been presented initially (mm. 185-192). There is a two measure extension of the theme (mm. 193-194) in which the clarinets play *pianissimo*, echoing the motive heard at the end of the theme in mm. 191-192. This motivic idea is in turn taken over by the strings which further expand it, developing it over a ten-measure period that involves a lengthy chromatic descent that finally reaches the dominant chord (mm. 195-204). As the section comes to a close, the timpani and the basses play C-sharps in repeated eighth notes while a new closing rhythmic figure appears (mm. 205). It consists of a descending dotted eighth-sixteenth-eight figure that is played initially by the flutes and then taken over by the clarinets and bassoons (Example 5.18):

Example 5.18. “Allegro Appassionato,” mm. 207-211



This process is repeated two more times reaching a dissolution in which the bassoons and the basses play a C-Sharp Seventh harmony that ends this section on a half cadence (mm. 210-211).

This brief return of the A section is represented in Diagram 5.3:

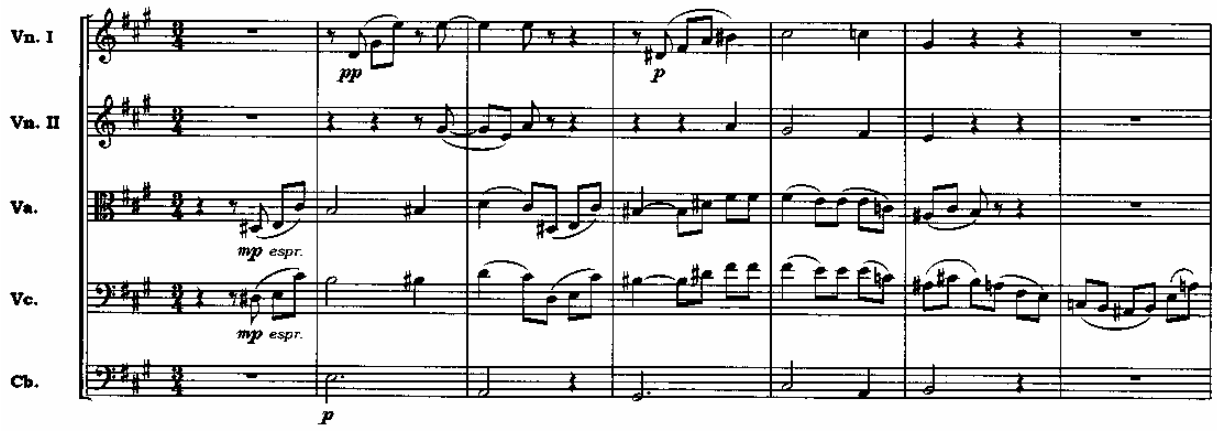
Diagram 5.3. Return of the A section in the “Allegro Appassionato”

Section:	A		
Instrumentation:	Orchestra	Orchestra	Orchestra
Theme:	‘A’ theme	transition	closing material
Key:	f#	f#	f#
Measure:	185	195	204
			Total Number of Measures: 27

5.2.2.4 The C Section (“Andantino Amoroso”)

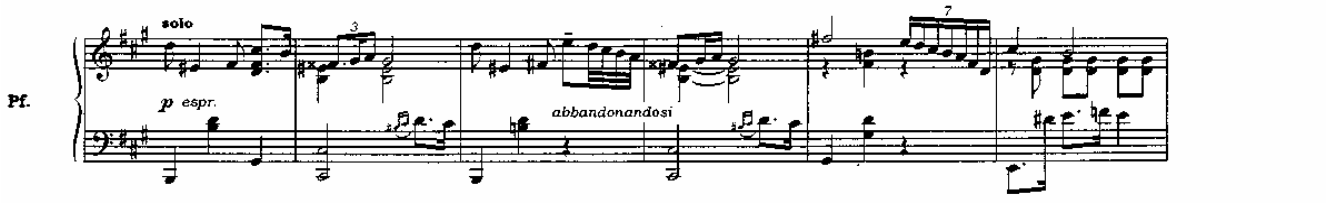
After these unusually interesting and extensive first two sections we arrive to an “Andantino Amoroso” in A Major, a slow section of lyric beauty that finds Ponce at his most inspired. However, the beautiful ‘Mexican sounding’ theme of this “Andantino” is not new, being a clear and subtle transformation of the motive that had emerged in the woodwinds and strings in the b4 sub-section (see Example 5.17). This theme, which shall be identified as the C theme, is presented in full form in an extended section played only by the strings. (Example 5.19):

Example 5.19. The C theme, “Andantino Amoroso,” mm.1-6



The theme is nine bars long (mm. 1-9)[14] and it is first played by the cellos and the violas. The first violins then take over in an extended statement thirteen measures long (mm. 10-22), which ends on a half cadence. A *rallentando* leads to the soloist's entrance and the presentation of introductory material that sounds rather improvisatory in nature, but which also resembles the main motivic component of the work (Example 5.20):

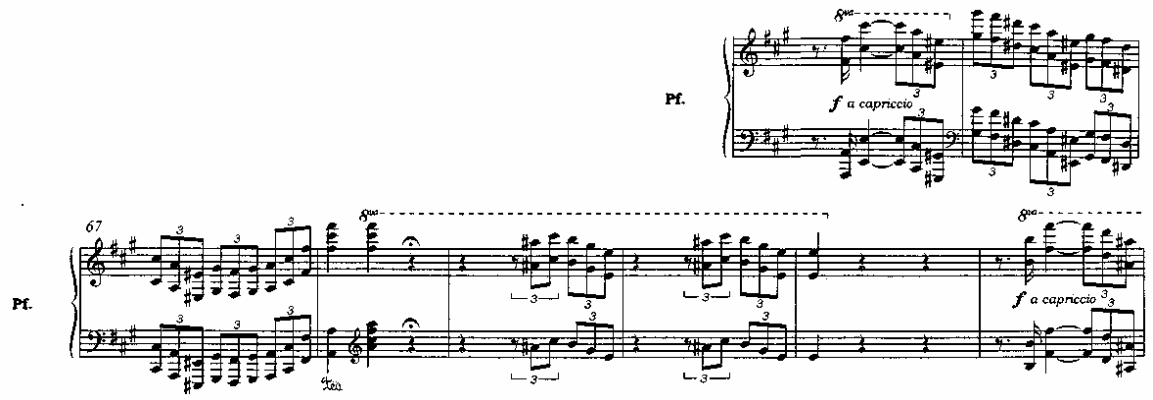
Example 5.20. Piano's introductory material, "Andantino Amoroso," mm. 23-28



A period of seventeen bars (mm. 23-39) in which the texture thickens and the passion increases climaxes into a statement of the C theme by the piano (m. 40-47) while the strings provide accompanimental support. As the interaction between both soloist and strings increases, the theme becomes more engaging and it is taken over again by the first violins while the piano now provides accompaniment in octaves' figurations. An extended modulation leads to a new climax, this time in the key of C Major (m.60). The intensity eventually recedes as Ponce introduces a dreamy section in which the strings alternate with the piano. Their chromatic figures outline a B9/7 harmony that does not resolve to E, but rather leads to an F-Sharp declamatory cadenza-like octave passage where Ponce asks the pianist to play *a capriccio* (mm. 62-68), shown in Example 5.21:

[14] As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Peer printed edition mistakenly identifies this section as the second movement of the concerto, therefore restarting the measure count. Despite this inaccuracy, and in lieu of the fact that this edition is the most accessible source to pursue further study of the concerto, this treatise will follow the measure numberings provided by Peer.

Example 5.21. “Andantino Amoroso,” mm. 62-69



This seven measure phrase is repeated in a new key: now an E9/7 chord remains unresolved and instead leads to another octave passage that ends in the unexpected key of D Minor (mm. 69-75). The section closes without a strong cadence in A major, but this tonality is reasserted immediately in the “Allegretto” that follows. A diagram for the C section is showed in Diagram 5.4:

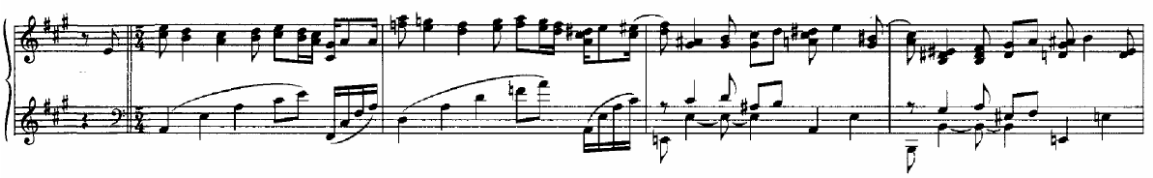
Diagram 5.4. The C Section (“Andantino Amoroso”)

Section:	C			
Instrumentation:	Orchestra	Piano	Orchestra & Piano	Orchestra & Piano
Theme:	‘C’ theme	Introduction	‘C’ theme	-
Key:	A	A	A – C	A - d
Measure:	1	23	48	62
			Total Number of Measures: 75	

5.2.2.5 The ‘D’ Section (“Allegretto”)

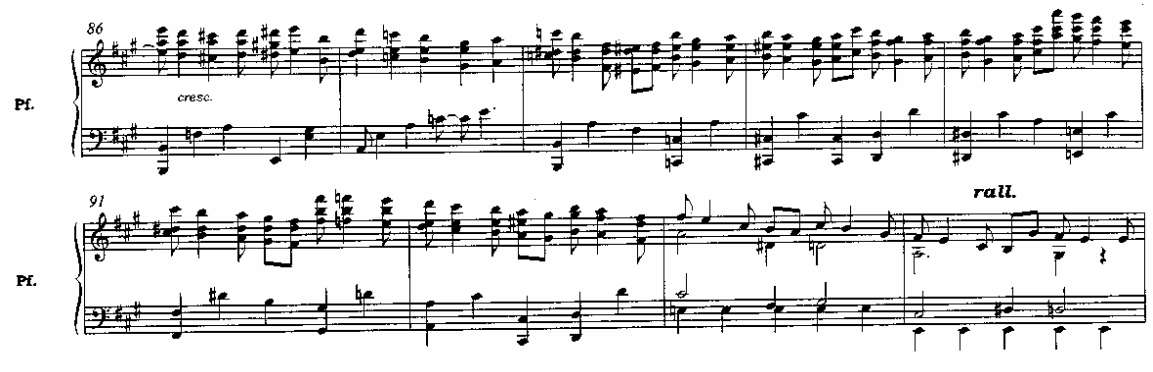
A long fermata and a double bar line lead the previous section to an “Allegretto” in A Major in 5/4, which will be identified as Section D. The theme of this “Allegretto,” melancholic and also ‘Mexican sounding,’ has abundant syncopation. The composer asks to play *teneramente*, and indeed this theme has a very delicate and serene quality (Example 5.22):

Example 5.22. The D theme, “Allegretto,” mm.76-79



The soloist introduces the four-bar theme (mm.76-79), which is repeated identically by the strings (mm. 80-83). The soloist returns for a more somber statement, now in the key of A minor. This time the phrase is expanded for seven bars (mm. 88-94) of heart-felt and wonderfully expressive piano writing. The peak occurs as the harmonic tension increases by way of an Augmented A chord and a D-Sharp fully diminished seventh chord (Example 5.23):

Example 5.23. “Allegretto,” mm. 86-94



Both intensity and tempo recede as an E7 chord and a *rallentando* lead the music back into another statement of the theme in A major, more nostalgic and distant, only accompanied by the English Horn. The “Allegretto” is the smallest section in the movement, and its ending also represents the end of the slow sections and the beginning of the would-be ‘Recapitulation.’ Diagram 5.5 illustrates the structure of this section:

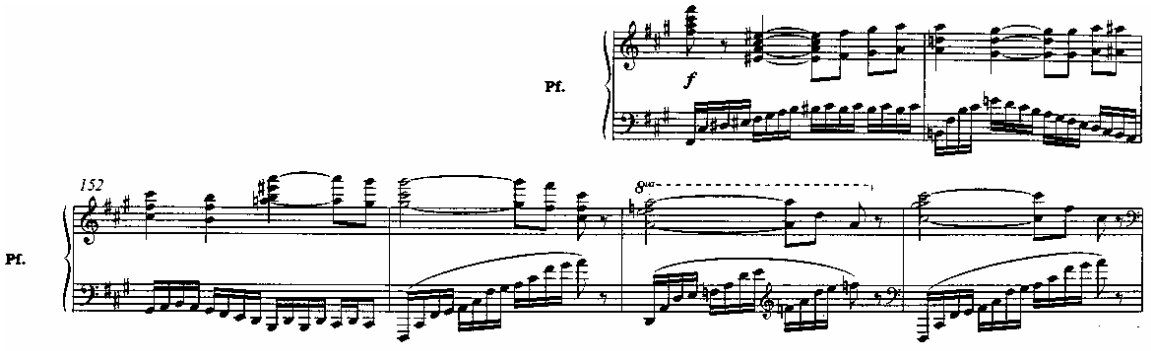
Diagram 5.5 The D Section (“Allegretto”)

Section:	D		
Instrumentation:	Piano	Orchestra	Orchestra & Piano
Theme:	‘D’ theme	‘D’ theme	‘D’ theme
Key:	A	A	a - A
Measure:	76	80	84
			Total Number of Measures: 28

5.2.2.6 The return of the B and A Sections (“Allegro come prima”)

To begin this section, Ponce omits the initial b1 sub-section and proceeds to b2. A reprise of the m3 motive, identical to the one in the ‘exposition’ is heard (mm. 104-115). A modulation begins after these twelve measures (mm.116-134), highly expanding the triplet motive shown in Example 5.14. This culminates with a D7 chord that cadences in G minor and restates the b3 in this new tonality (mm. 135-141). Following the procedure undertaken in the ‘Exposition’, the triplet figures are repeated a step higher, now in the key of A Minor. The modal mixture tonic chord of this key works as a pivot, creating a two-bar modulation (mm.148-149) that cadences in the expected F-Sharp Minor chord. This resolution creates an elision with the consequent return of the A theme (mm. 150-155), which is presented in a virtuosic fashion by the soloist (Example 5.24):

Example 5.24 Return of the ‘A’ theme, “Allegro come prima,” mm. 150-155



The closing and climactic material of the b4 sub-section skillfully follows this short statement (mm.156-164). The concise nature of this ‘Recapitulation’ is appropriate in

consideration with the initial size of the ‘Exposition’ sections. At the beginning, these sections were highly extensive (211 measures in total), and this explains the further unnecessary repetition that leads Ponce to present them in a condensed manner during the ‘Recapitulation.’ These abridged sections still maintain the order presented in the ‘Exposition,’ as the B section is followed by the A section. In the original exposition the climax that led to the return of ‘A’ had ended the soloist’s part and the theme had been presented by an orchestral *tutti*. This time, it is the piano that gets the A theme. In fact, its appearance closely resembles the soloist’s first presentation of the theme (mm. 56-62). This process concludes the A section and leads directly to the solo cadenza that closes the movement. A diagram describing the return of the B and A sections is shown below:

Diagram 5.6. The return of the B and A sections in the “Allegro come Prima”

Section:	B	
Sub-Section	b2	b3
Instrumentation:	Orchestra & Piano	Orchestra & Piano
Theme:	m3	-
Key:	A	g - a - f#
Measure:	104	135
		Total Number of Measures: 46
Section:	A	
Instrumentation:	Orchestra & Piano	Orchestra & Piano
Theme:	‘A’ theme	closing (from b4)
Key:	f#	f#
Measure:	150	156
		Total Number of Measures: 21

5.2.2.7. The Solo Cadenza

The cadenza begins with the cascading sixteenth notes sextuplets that had introduced the piano part after the initial orchestral *tutti*. Ponce follows through with the same material that had appeared in mm.28-44, but this time the long trill fails to resolve in F-Sharp Minor. Instead, the phrase ends with a half-cadence. This introductory

material is further complemented by presentations of excerpts from all the main themes from the previous sections, a factor which further substantiates the theory that everything heard up to this point constitutes only one movement.

The tranquil C theme, in its original key of A Major, is introduced first, but this time it is embellished by right hand figurations (mm. 188-192). A second statement of the theme occurs, this time marked *dolcissimo*. This leads to an "*Allegro con fuoco*" (mm.196-204) in which a resolute forte statement of the same theme is expanded through the alternation of D-Sharp and B-Sharp fully diminished Seventh chords. The B-Sharp chord resolves to C-Sharp Minor and presents the head of the A theme in the right hand as the left hand plays tumultuous octaves (mm. 205-211). A more definite statement of the A theme head in the same key is complemented by even more explosive octave passages which lead to an additional statement, now in the original key of F-Sharp Minor (mm. 214-219). A more improvisatory-sounding "*Quasi Andante*" presents two statements which display a long trill in the right hand and the C theme in the left hand (mm. 220-227). The trill evolves into right hand descending figurations that are followed by a very short citation to the "Allegretto" D theme (m. 231). The *a capriccio* octave passage that had closed the C Section returns, counteracting abruptly with the serene D theme (mm. 232-239). A passage of trills and *tremolandos* outlining a B half-diminished seventh chord ends the cadenza and the movement on a quiet note.

5.2.2.8 The First Movement's Form

The most cohesive argument is to call this form a loosely developed and rather free sonata-rondo. The original sonata-rondo would only have three sections, and would follow an ABACABA pattern. However, Ponce's addition of another section (D) generates a substantial problem as it tremendously increases the structure. Following a strict design of the form that would result from such an increase would be musically

ineffective due to its inordinate length and the excessive number of repetitions of the A section (example: ABACADABACA). Therefore, Ponce makes several adjustments to the form by doing the following: (1) Due to the increased length of the first A section (59 measures), further repetitions are shorter in nature—the second appearance is 27 measures and the last one 21 measures.

(2) The order of presentation in the 'Recapitulation' is reversed (B, A instead of A, B), which automatically cancels the ensuing A section (avoiding B, A, A).

3) Ponce does not include in the 'Recapitulation' a restatement of the C theme, as that would likely merit another inclusion of the A section. However, the reappearance of this theme will occur in the second movement. The complex overall form of the first movement is illustrated in Diagram 5.7:

Diagram 5.7. Overall Form of the First Movement

Section:	A		B				A
Sub-section:	-		b1	b2	b3	b4	-
Instrumentation:	Orchestra	Piano	[----------Orchestra & Piano----------]				Orchestra
Theme:	'A'-tr.	Intro.-'A'	m1-m2	m3	-	m3-m2-m3-m4	'A'- tr. –closing.
Key Areas:	f#	f#	f#- G-F#-f#	A-f#	f#-g#-Bb-Db	Gb - A - f#	f#
Tonality:	[---------- f# ----------]						

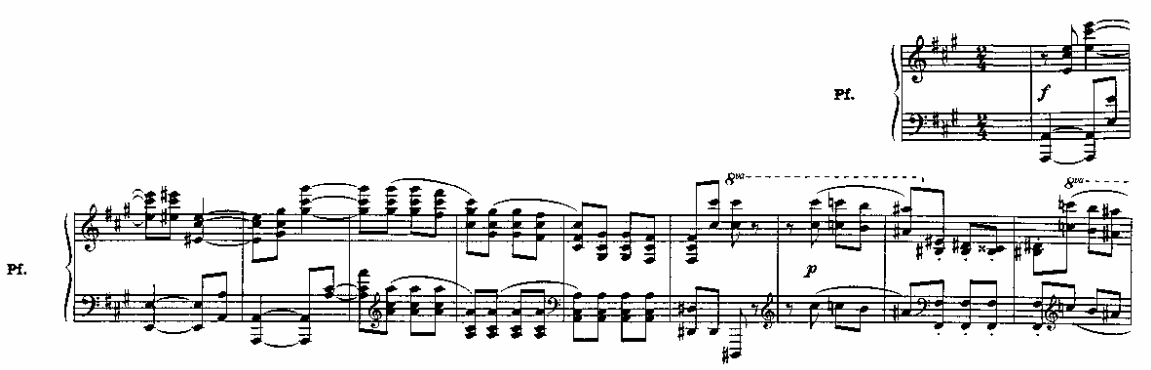
Section:	C			D		B		A	Cadenza	
Sub-section:	-			-		b2	b3	-	-	
Instrumentation:	Orchestra	Piano	Orch. & Pno.	Pno. Orch.	[----------Orchestra & Piano----------]				Piano	
Theme:	'C'	Intro.	'C' -	D'	'D' 'D'	m3	-	'A'- cl.(b4)	Intro. - 'C' - 'A' – 'C'-	'D'
Key Areas:	A	f#	A-C	A-d	A A a-A	A	g-a-f#	f#	f# A c#-f#	c#-d A
Tonality:	[----------A----------]					[----------f#----------/A----------]				

5.2.3 The *Concierto Romántico*'s Second Movement

5.2.3.1 The Finale's A Section

The Finale that follows, in A major and 2/4 time, is a brisk movement that begins with the strings playing a rather ambiguous *pizzicato* introduction in eighth notes which outlines an E7 harmony (mm. 1-6). A swift crescendo in a timpani trill (mm. 7-8) introduces the main theme of the movement, presented by the piano, and identified as "Theme a" (Example 5.25):

Example 5.25. "Theme a," of the "Allegro," mm. 9-18

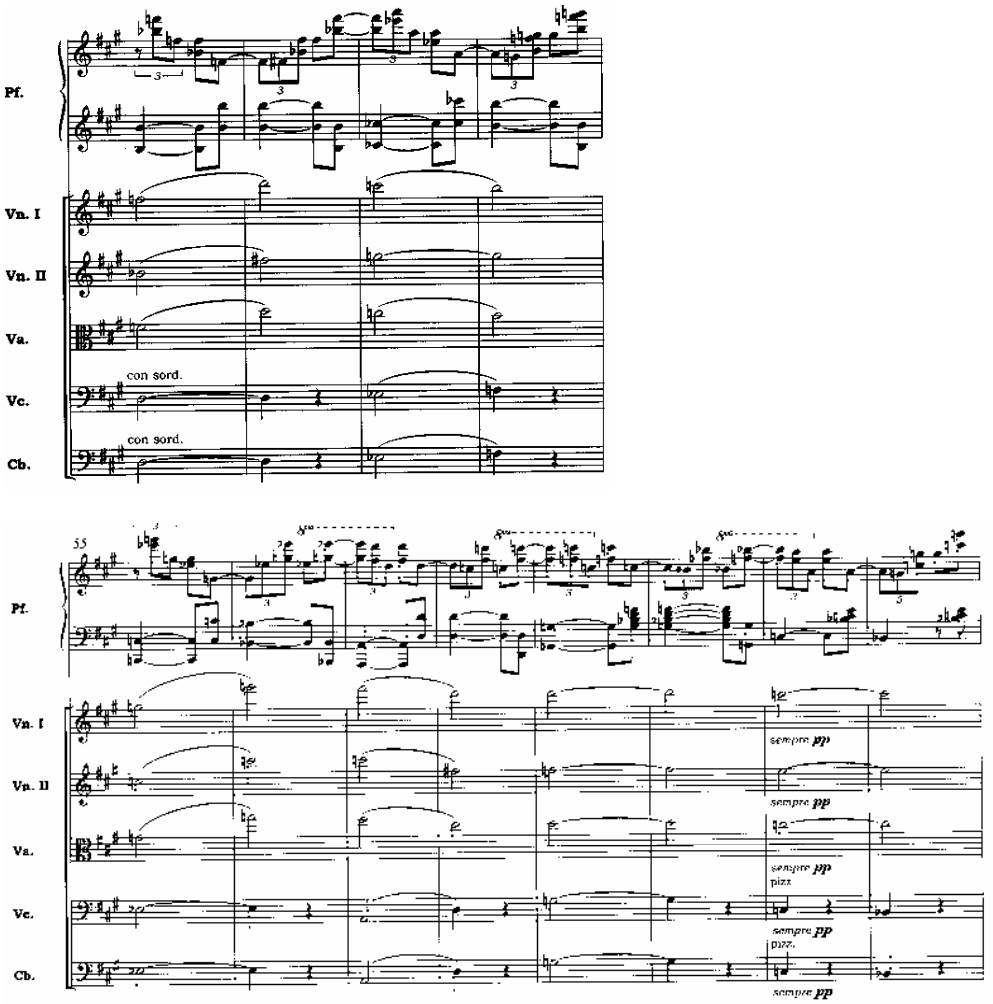


The theme's antecedent phrase (mm. 9-15) is seven measures long and culminates with a D-Sharp fully diminished seventh chord (vii of V). The consequent phrase (mm. 16-24), highly chromatic, introduces flutes, clarinets, and bassoons as the piano presents a descending sequence that involves difficult leaps between large areas of the piano. This leads to an impassioned statement of the piano (mm. 25-34) as the strings alternate between *pizzicato* and *arco* playing. The music reaches the dominant through a series of fully diminished seventh chords and cadences for an apparent restatement of the theme, at measure 35. This time however, a modulation begins as the soloist's left hand descends chromatically (mm. 37-41). A second appearance of the sequence that had appeared in mm. 16-24, now in a new key (mm.43-50), modulates to the Neapolitan

(B-Flat Major) and elides with the next section. This first theme, which can be described as both playful and mysterious, combines light hearted French elements in the style of Saint-Saens and Offenbach with the mischievous qualities found in Liszt's virtuoso piano writing.

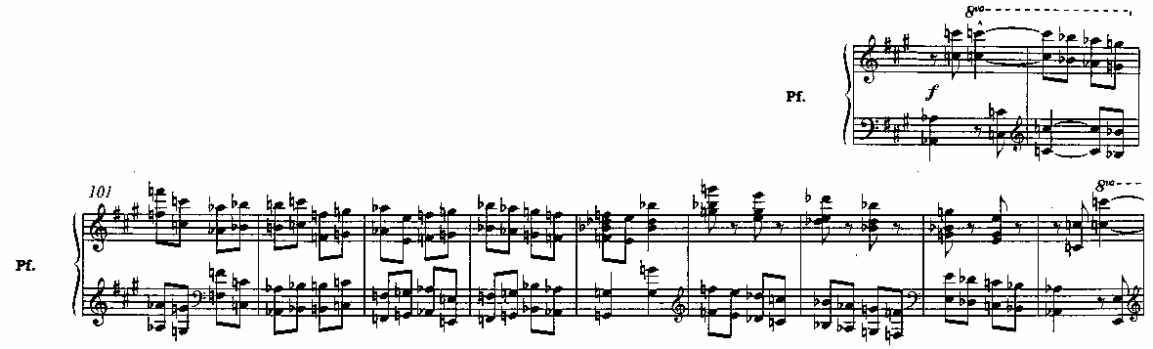
The second thematic area is an expansive section that offers little harmonic stability, as it modulates away from the original key of the movement (A Major) and explores a variety of both closely related and also distant keys. The thematic material of this section, identified as "Theme b" (m. 51) is shown in Example 5.26:

Example 5.26. "Theme b," of the "Allegro," mm. 51-62



This lyric theme presents the strings playing with *sordino* a rather *dolce* and *cantabile* melody. The piano, which becomes fixed in an accompanimental rhythmic pattern for most of this section, just provides color to the texture created by the strings. This section is amply extended, containing a series of unusual modulations. Although it begins in B-Flat Major, a more detailed harmonic analysis shows that in fact the first tonal area is F Major, the confirmation of which happens through the ii-V7-I tag occurring in mm. 59-63. This tonality continues until measures 75, where a B-Flat Minor chord (iv of F) becomes the pivot of the next tonal area, G-Flat Major (iii in that key). The resolution from dominant to tonic (D-Flat to G-Flat) occurs in mm. 79-81. This distant key is short lasting, as the harmonic motion once again begins a modulation, now by way of a C-Sharp Minor chord (v, enharmonically spelled in G-Flat), which becomes iii in the new key of A Major. This time the harmonic center is established by the way of a B Major chord (V/V), leading to a V7 chord, and then onto A Major (mm. 85-89). Once again however, a modulating process begins, now to the more distant key of E-Flat Major. This is achieved through an A-Flat 9/7 chord that acts as the V7 of III (G-Sharp going to C-Sharp, again enharmonically spelled). It resolves deceptively to the iii of D-Flat Major- F Minor. This new chord now acts as another pivot chord that functions as a ii in E-Flat Major, which is reached again by way of ii-V7-I (mm. 92-95). An apparent secondary dominant (V/ii) leads to F minor, whose cadence in measure 99 finally ends the piano's unchanging rhythmic pattern. It leads to a virtuosic octave passage that serves as closing material for this section, whose beginning is reminiscent of the "Theme a" motive (Example 5.27):

Example 5.27. “Allegro,” mm. 99-109



The strings join the piano (mm. 105-109) as an E fully diminished seventh chord leads to a repetition of the octave passage, again in F Minor. This time however, it is the bassoons that answer the piano’s statement and provide a new harmony- a D7 chord which cadences in G Minor in measure 119, ending this section. The structure of this first section can be observed in Diagram 5.8:

Diagram 5.8. The A Section (“Allegro”)

Section:	A		
Instrumentation:	Orchestra	Orchestra & Piano	Orchestra & Piano
Theme:	Intro	a	b
Key:	(a)	A	F-Gb-A-f
Measure:	1	9	51

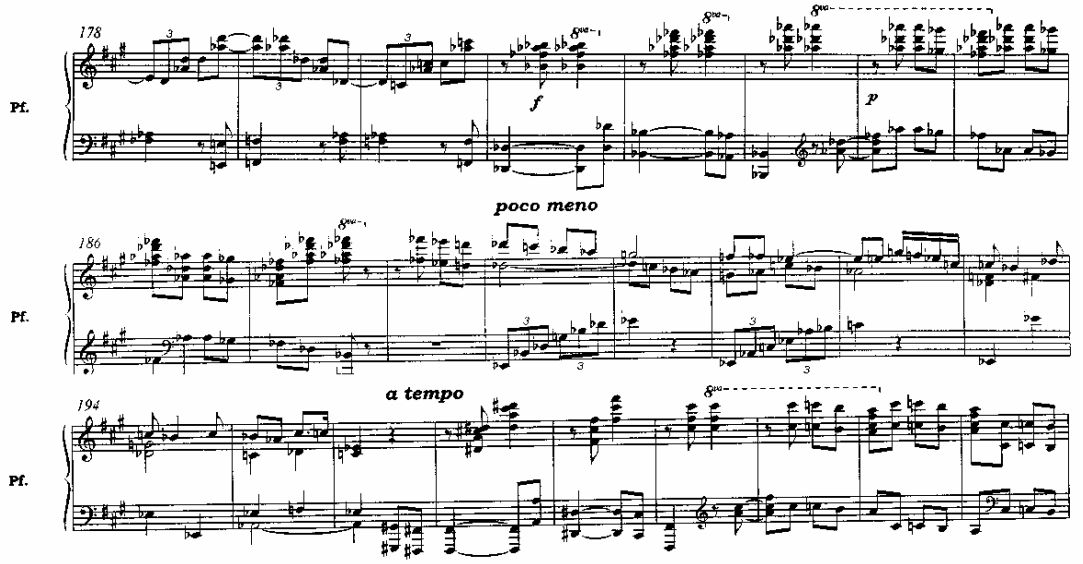
Total Number of Measures: 118

5.2.3.2 The Finale’s B Section

A huge developmental section follows in which both themes from the ‘A’ section are explored. Theme ‘a’ in G minor, appears in the first flute, and fugue-like entrances occur as the second flute and first bassoon join in (mm.119-124). The strings’ entrance at measure 125 creates tension through a series of chromatically ascending unresolved seventh chords that finally reach an A7 chord that cadences to D minor (mm. 125-129). This ten measure phrase is repeated in the new key. Now the first clarinet presents the ‘a’ theme, and is followed by the second clarinet and the first bassoon (mm. 129-134). The strings repeat the process undertaken in the previous phrase, this time reaching an

E7 chord that cadences to A Minor in measure 139. A third repetition of the sequence occurs (mm. 139-149) involving more instruments. Both first and second flutes present the ‘a’ theme motive, now followed by the Oboe and the English Horn. The bassoons again have the final entrance, and the strings once more close the phrase which modulates to E Major by way of its V7 chord. The ‘b’ theme is explored in this more optimistic key (mm. 148-156), as the strings provide long melodic notes while the piano returns to the accompanimental rhythmic pattern that had permeated most of its part during the original ‘b’ theme. The ‘a’ theme rhythmic motive abruptly interrupts for eight bars (mm. 157-164) the dreamy quality of the previous statement, but it is counteracted with a suave statement of a melody derived from the ‘b’ theme which begins in the key of C minor (m. 165) and which is greatly expanded as it incorporates elements from the ‘a’ theme (mm. 181-187). This is answered by a new phrase in the key of E-Flat Major which presents a melodic and expressive statement reminiscent of the ‘b’ theme (Example 5.28):

Example 5.28. “Allegro,” mm. 178-202



An almost identical repetition of those sixteen bars, occurs in measures 197-212, now cadencing in the key of C-Sharp Major. This leads to further developmental material of "Theme a", which is now presented in a more virtuosic fashion. Rapid sixteenth note passages in the piano are alternated with winds first, and then with strings (mm. 213-239). The section reaches a climax and a prolonged E Augmented harmony (mm. 240-253) resolves to A Major and the proper return of the 'a' theme. This developmental section can be diagrammed as follows:

Diagram 5.9. The B Section ("Allegro")

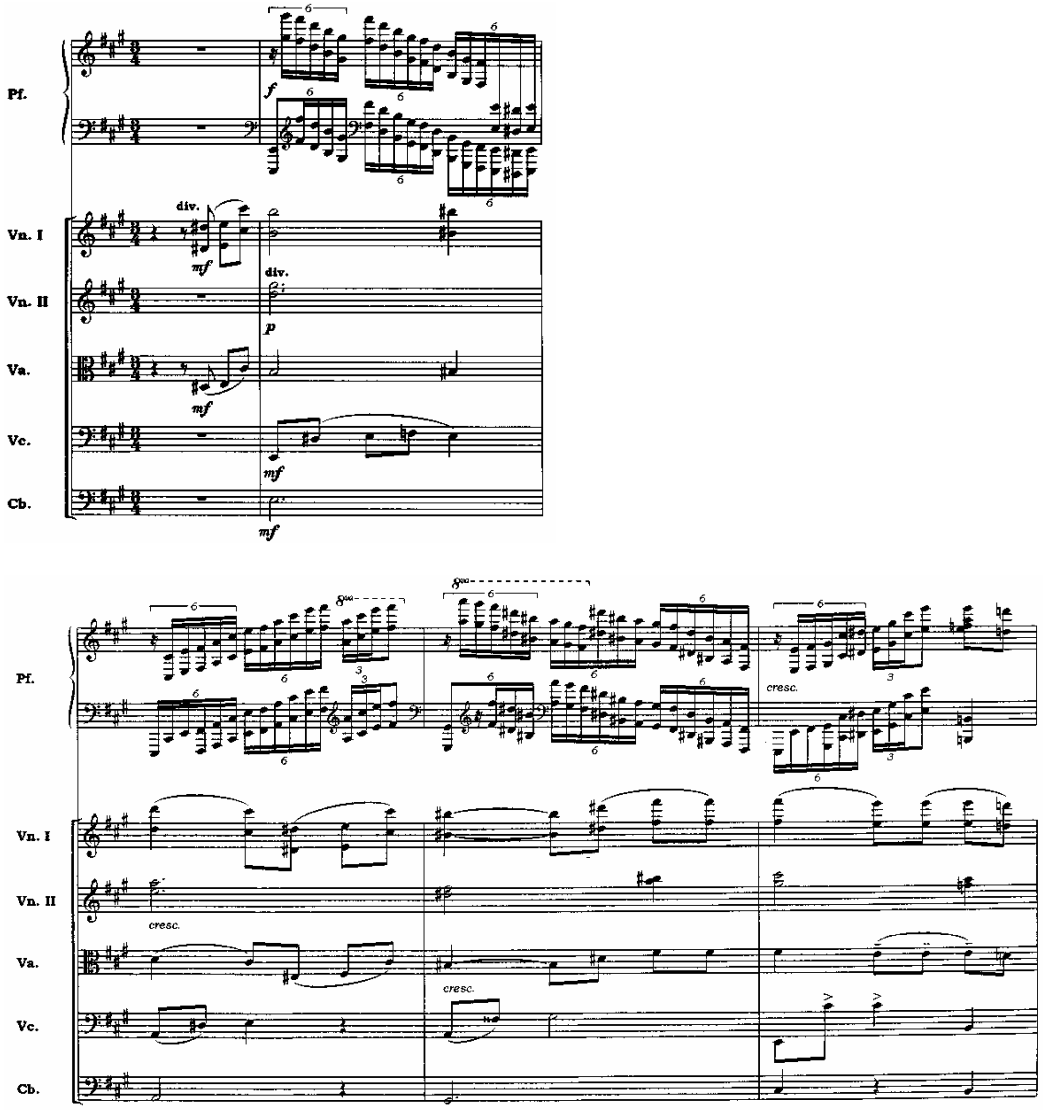
Section:	B						
Instrumentation:	Orchestra	Orchestra & Piano					
Theme:	a	b	- a	- b	a,b	a	
Key:	g-d-a	E	-	c	Eb	C#	A
Measure:	119	149	157	165	180	197	213

Total Number of Measures: 135

5.2.3.3 The Return of the A section and the Coda

The first twenty-seven bars (mm. 254-280) in the return of the 'a' theme are identical to those presented in the first 'A' section. The cadence leading to a new appearance of the theme presents an expansion that alternates between A Major and F7 harmonies (mm. 280-292). This is followed by a B half-diminished seventh chord that leads to a long rest (quarter note with a fermata) in measure 295. "Theme b" should follow after the pause, but instead, Ponce decides to omit it and skips to the *Coda* of the movement, where very unexpectedly, the missing C theme from the first movement's complex structure reappears. This obviously stands as the climax of the whole concerto, in a section headed *Lentamente* (Example 5.29):

Example 5.29. *Coda* of the “Allegro,” mm. 297-300



Accompanying the orchestra, the piano plays rapid and loud octaves in sixteenth note sextuplets that display great virtuosity for the soloist (mm.297-302). A fermata on an E dominant seventh chord (with an added sixth) cadences to a short *codetta* headed *Allegro vivo* of primitive character (mm. 304-316) in which the piano plays additional quick octaves while the full orchestra plays short and loud chords. The concerto ends excitingly in A major. A diagram of this last section can be seen below:

Diagram 5.10 The return of the A section and the *Coda* (“Allegro”)

Section:	A	Coda	
Subsection:	-	-	Codetta
Instrumentation:	Orchestra & Piano	Orchestra & Piano	Orchestra & Piano
Theme:	a	C (from 1st movement)	-
Key:	A	A	A
Measure:	254	295	304

Total Number of Measures: 63

5.2.3.4 The Second Movement’s Form

The form of this movement could be described as a compound ternary with sonata form characteristics. This is due to the fact that the middle section is developmental in nature and does not present a contrasting theme. The return of the A section is abridged in the sense that ‘Theme b’ does not reappear. Ponce balances this omission by greatly exploring ‘Theme b’ during the development. The rarest but at the same time, most imposing masterstroke of this movement is the return of the glorious C theme from the first movement, which certainly is the most memorable theme from the whole concerto. The return of this theme not only provides closure to the form of the first movement, in which this theme had been missing in the ‘Recapitulation,’ but also helps Ponce’s intent to make this work a cyclic composition.

The form of the second movement is shown in Diagram 5.11:

Diagram 5.11. Overall Form of the Second Movement

| | | |

5.3 Summary of Findings

The main conclusion gathered from the overview of the analytical resources depicting the processes of this piece is that the current level of research was insufficient and in need of a more global analysis. It should also be noted that Almazán and Castellanos' findings have been essential to more accurately comprehend and disseminate the work's main components. The results brought forth by this study contrast those of Almazán and Castellanos in the areas of form and harmonic analysis, which are two of the work's most interesting and intriguing aspects. In terms of form, this treatise has identified recognizable elements in regard to the particular sections that form part of the large-scale design. This analysis proved that Castellanos' proposed sonata-form structure was implausible, and that Almazán's description of the sectional elements that form the first movement could be substantiated through thematic recurrence and tonal coherence found within the sections labeled "Allegro Appassionato," "Andantino Amoroso," "Allegretto", and "Allegro come Prima." This study also found that the thematic and motivic components contained in each of those sections were crucial in determining a structural label which could encompass the unique and distinct form of the first movement. The sonata-rondo denomination proved to be an appropriate designation due to not only the thematic recurrence present in the movement, but also the organization of such recurrence. In that regard, this study found the 'hybrid form between rondo and variations' proposed by Almazán to be structurally unviable and tonally incongruous. However, the end result of this study also creates an extremely unusual design in terms of the whole concerto's form: an extensive first movement of massive proportions compared to the concise second movement that follows it. This inevitably leads to reconsideration of Castellanos' basic identification of the *Concierto Romántico* as an overall one-movement work, and the ensuing question of

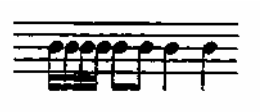
whether a different form denomination can better serve to understand the atypical nature of Ponce's design.

In his article "De México, concierto para Andrés Segovia: Una visita al *Concierto del sur* de Manuel M. Ponce", Alejandro Madrid describes the form of the last movement of Ponce's *Concierto del Sur* as a Rondo that contains the following structure: 'ABACADCAEC.' If the *Concierto Romántico*'s entire second movement is relabeled as an E section instead of a separate movement, the similarities between this form and the one proposed by Madrid are striking, the resulting structure thus becoming ABACDBAEC. While such a depiction is certainly possible, there are two important factors to consider from such conclusion: (1) The distortion that occurs in the Rondo structure in the sense that the C digression acquires more importance than the main A episode could be structurally overlooked, but the tonal difference between those sections (the 'A' in F-Sharp Minor and the 'C' in A Major), and the resulting bi-tonal structure of the work, lessens the probability of such interpretation, and (2) while each of the sections that comprise the first movement stands on its own in terms of the large scale design, the resulting E section's dimensions and structural components are more akin to that of a separate entity, and not forming part of a larger structure. Therefore, while a 'Rondo' denomination could be ascribed to the *Concierto Romántico*, a more clarifying answer might result from the analysis of yet another of Ponce's works: the Second Piano Sonata, from 1916.

The Second Piano Sonata is a two-movement work in which the first movement *Allegro* is in sonata-allegro form, while the second movement is an *Allegro Scherzo* in ternary form. The work was analyzed by Dahlia Ann Guerra in her dissertation *Manuel M. Ponce: A study of his solo piano works and his relation to Mexican Musical Nationalism*. Guerra accurately describes each movement's contents, although she fails to provide commentary on the rare two-movement structure. While this work is not

meant as a one-movement sonata in the sense that the *Concierto Romántico* is a one-movement concerto, Ponce also strives for a type of cyclic unity in this work. This is achieved through a rhythmic motive that permeates the entire structure of the first movement and which subtly appears in the second movement's A section. The rhythm stems, as Guerra points out, from a Mexican song titled "El Sombrero Ancho" [The Wide Hat], seen in Example 5.30:

Example 5.30. Main rhythmic motive, Second Piano Sonata's "Allegro"



The resulting similarities between the proposed structure of the *Concierto Romántico* and the Second Sonata are remarkable: A long first movement of large proportions which is followed by a light-hearted scherzo-like second movement, smaller in scope. The design of the Second Sonata, written six years after the *Concierto Romántico*, confirms not only that Ponce found that structure to be musically practicable, but that he was convinced enough of its potential to write another work with extremely similar characteristics.

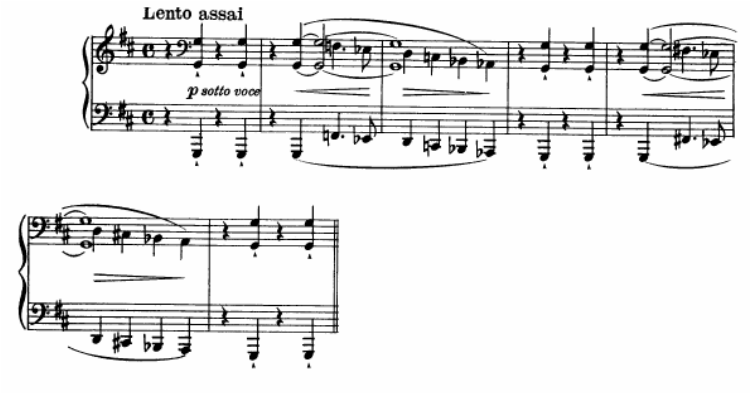
The one remaining question seems to be tonality. The Second Sonata begins in C-Sharp Minor and ends in D-Flat Major. This is consistent and acceptable as ending on the parallel major key was a common procedure in Romantic music. The discrepancy between the different tonalities that begin and end the *Concierto Romántico* can be explained by Heinrich Schenker's (1868-1935) concept of 'auxiliary cadence.' An auxiliary cadence can be described as "an incomplete bass arpeggiation (Bassbrechung) that begins with a I6 or a non-tonic chord such as V, VI, IV, III, and II. Such beginnings shift the emphasis of tonal arrival to the concluding I of the auxiliary cadence. Auxiliary cadences often appear in the context of a modulation, and help lead

smoothly from one tonal degree to another."[144] As such, the first section of the concerto begins with such a cadence and establishes F-Sharp Minor (the vi of A major), as a temporary tonality that appears to be the tonic due to its initial establishment and prolonged presence. However, the concerto's real tonality is A Major and the overt manifestation of F-Sharp Minor as the tonic is simply part of Ponce's design to maintain interest in the tonal implications of the work. The main concept behind the auxiliary cadence is to establish a non tonic key that then progresses to a sub-dominant area, the dominant area, and finally reaches the tonic. In the case of Ponce's piano concerto, the temporary tonality established by the auxiliary cadence (F-Sharp Minor) is finally resolved in the piano solo cadenza that bridges the first movement with the Finale. The movement away from F-Sharp minor begins after the half-cadence occurring in m. 187. This is primarily established by the persistent inclusion of E-naturals and an eventual cadence in C-sharp minor (m. 205). This dominant minor serves as a pivot chord to begin the modulation to the tonic key. Dominant preparation is achieved by the constant presentation of C-Sharp Minor chords in first inversion. The music arrives at an A6/4 in measure 224, reaching the dominant area. The dominant pedal that occurs from measures 229-249 (the end of the cadenza), appears on the surface to continually outline a B minor half-diminished seventh chord. In actuality, observation of the large-scale voice leading demonstrates that this is in fact a suspended E7 chord, with the 'F' and the 'A' of the supposed B half-diminished chord resolving to E and G-Sharp in the introduction of the Finale (mm. 1-8). This chord in turn cadences to A Major in measure 9, as the piano introduces 'Theme a' of this movement. This arrival to A Major constitutes the resolution of the auxiliary cadence and the proper and final establishment of the concerto's real tonic key.

[144] Roger Kamien. "Quasi-Auxiliary Cadences Beginning on a Root-Position Tonic Chord: Some Preliminary Observations" in *Journal of Schenkerian Studies*, First Issue. Online Abstract (Accessed 15 April 2007) Retrieved <https://web3.unt.edu/the/centers.php?css=articles>

Ponce's quest to establish an increased sense of tonal ambiguity in the *Concierto Romántico* can stem from the influence of Liszt's Sonata in B Minor. In Liszt's example, the tonic key is not established until eight bars into the piece (a strong cadence in B minor does not occur until m. 32). The beginning measures appear to outline a tonal center revolving around the key of G Minor (Example 5.31):

Example 5.31. Liszt's Sonata in B Minor, mm. 1-7



While Ponce's use of an auxiliary cadence offers a musical explanation for this substantive tonal ambiguity, the reasoning behind Ponce' approach cannot be understood exclusively by musical terms. The possible non-musical connotations of this procedure will be further addressed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

COMPOSITIONAL PRACTICE AND SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE *CONCIERTO ROMÁNTICO*

6.1 Need for Musicological Research

Two of the previous chapters have discussed in detail essential elements related to gaining a deeper understanding of the *Concierto Romántico*. Chapter 3 situated the work within Ponce's concerto output, provided its compositional background, and supplied copious referential information that created a generic picture of how the concerto was viewed by critics, historians and biographers. It also described the work's performance history during Ponce's lifetime and suggested the place it occupies in Mexican piano concerto literature. Chapter 5 thoroughly reviewed the existing resources dealing with analytical approaches to the work. Furthermore, it examined the stylistic models of the concerto and the musical works that were influential in its creation. It also contributed, by way of a descriptive and detailed analysis, to a more substantial awareness of the piece's harmonic and structural components. While such information contributes profoundly to an understanding of the concerto, a global perception cannot be complete without musicological research that provides insight into the ideological principles on which the work is based and, ultimately, offers a holistic interpretative approach aimed towards grasping and comprehending the meaning of the music.

This sociological method is constructed from the theory that an analytical study based on musical traditions, rules, standards, and models as basic components of compositional style is equal in importance to a descriptive one that generates awareness

of cultural traditions and forces.[1] The development of musical style is therefore influenced by the particular social perspective of the composer, which is affected by the society in which he lives.[2] Additionally, these standards should be directed toward achieving a social goal that is realized through compositional choices, which are determined by the intended audience, location and occasion.[3] The musical material available to the composer is drawn from three main sources. It is comprised of (1) Art music of his country passed to him from his immediate predecessors, (2) all other strata of his country's complex musical culture (excluding Art music, but including children's songs and dances, folk songs, commercial music, ethnic music, and so forth), and (3) music cultures from outside his country of which he may have knowledge.[4] As will be seen later, the musical material that forms the thematic contents of Ponce's *Concierto Romántico* is consistent with this theoretical perspective. Therefore, while a substantial analysis of Ponce's social and compositional philosophies are fundamental to comprehending the ideological postulates of the *Concierto Romántico*, a brief portrayal of the socio-historic situation of pre-revolutionary Mexico is also necessary to understand the context in which the composer was living and working.

6.2 Socio-historic Background of Pre-revolutionary Mexico (1876-1910)

The thirty-four year presidency of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910) can be described as a controversial era which brought considerable changes to the country. Politically, it was characterized by an enormous centralization of power, which originated through Díaz' betrayal of the non-reelectionist platform that had originally ascended him to power.[5] The second half of the Porfirian era was influenced by the group of "científicos' [scientists],

[1] Kaphan, 2.
[2] Ibid., 3.
[3] Ibid., 7.
[4] Ibid., 6.
[5] Juan Brom. *Esbozo de Historia de México* (México D.F.: Editorial Grijalbo, 1980), 247.

so called because their governmental policies were guided by the rules of science. Taking advantage of their high ranks in the government, they promoted economic policies that fostered foreign investment over national interests.[6] Socially, they instituted a type of Social Darwinism that was focused on overpowering the indigenous sectors of the country.[7] Díaz himself generated rivalry between the different political factions as a means to prevent a single group from consolidating enough influence to question his authority. The last fifteen years of his government were particularly noteworthy for the struggles that took place between the "científicos" and the military spheres.[8]

The various cultures within the population, which reached fifteen million by the end of the Díaz administration, contrasted significantly according to the different geographic regions. In the North, where there was a notable population growth in the larger cities, the main industries were mining and agriculture. In the Central and Southern regions there continued to be adherence to indigenous traditional practices that stemmed back to the Colonial period. These groups' lifestyle diverged considerably from those forming part of a small group of wealthy landlords, whose amassed fortunes increased during the Díaz presidency. The discontent of these lower classes gradually increased and was shared by the middle class, whose growth began to stall by the late 19th century after prospering during the first half of the Porfirian dictatorship.[9]

The economy benefited from the growth of mining and small industries, as well as the creation of an extense network of railroads. This certainly accounted for progress and modernity, since "in 1876 the nation had less than 800 kilometers of railroads, but by 1910 more than 19,000 kilometers of lines knitted the country together. Admittedly the primary direction of the lines was to the United States border or to port cities where

[6] Ibid, 248.
[7] Lynn Foster. *A Brief History of Mexico* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1997), 151.
[8] Brom, 248.
[9] Ibid.

products grown or produced in Mexico entered the international market."[10] Despite the unquestionable advancement generated by railroad construction, their development also provided a governmental mechanism of control that facilitated the means to apply policies of repression.[11] Agriculture, cattle raising, craftsmanship and small commerce were in Mexican hands, contrasting with the ownership of larger industries like mining, oil, and commerce, which where run by foreigners. Rural property was concentrated primarily in the *haciendas*, where peasants were at the mercy of landlords and lived in extreme poverty. Large landowners were in control of most unclaimed lands, in addition to others that had previously belonged to Indians or small owners.[12]

The elite and the bourgeoisie enjoyed a lifestyle influenced by French culture which promoted a Romantic vision of life. The National University was founded in the midst of intense artistic and scientific activity. Nonetheless illiteracy remained high among a majority of the population. Sectors of society that disagreed with governmental policy were usually quickly suppressed, although there were prolonged uprisings in states like Sonora and Quintana Roo. The slogan of Porfirio Díaz' presidency thus became "'Bread and the Club': bread for the army, bread for the bureaucrats, bread for the foreigners, and even bread for the Church— and the club for the common people of Mexico and those who differed with him."[13] As such, it could be concluded that the Revolution of 1910 was caused by both sociopolitical and socioeconomic reasons that developed during the Porfirian era and coincided with a profound financial crisis and the aging of a regime, whose old and feeble structures no longer corresponded with a dynamic society in transformation.[14] Sociopolitical causes included the prolonged permanence of Díaz in power, growing rivalries between members of the Porfirian elites,

[10] Burton Kirkwood. *The History of Mexico* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 122-123.
[11] Brom, 246.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Lesley Bird Simpson. Quoted in Foster, 138.
[14] Gloria M. Delgado de Cantú. *Historia de México II: Estado Moderno y Crisis en el México del Siglo XX* (México D.F.: Alhambra Bachiller, 1992), 9.

the electoral fraud operated by the governmental apparatus in the presidential election of 1910, the lack of opportunities for political promotion for members of the middle class, and the virtual nullification of freedom and democracy, vital principles of liberal politics.[15] Socioeconomic reasons consisted of the business middle class' inconformity with the financial oligarchy imposed by the "*científicos*", the increasing corruption and power abuse that surrounded Diaz' inner circles, the unequal treatment and discriminatory practices that Mexican workers in mines and factories endured in comparison to the higher salaries and proper labor conditions given to foreign workers, peasant dissatisfaction for the unfair loss of their lands, and the social effects of the economic crisis that occurred in 1907.[16]

Ponce never collaborated or received support from the Díaz administration. In fact, the 1912 concerts where the *Concierto Romántico* was premiered were economically sponsored by the government of Francisco I. Madero, Díaz' successor.[17]

6.3 Manuel M. Ponce's Compositional Practice and Social Philosophy

Ponce's philosophical views and their influence on his compositional style can be better understood through the research done by Rodrigo Herrera. Herrera, a great-grand nephew of Ponce, benefited from his distant relationship to the composer, gaining access to documents that positively portray and genuinely illustrate the deep ideological nature of the composer's work. Herrera's study, *The Chronology, List of Works, and Nationalist Ideology of Manuel M. Ponce*, is a valuable document that allows a comparison of Ponce's general philosophy with the more concise and distinct examples found in the *Concierto Romántico*. To further substantiate these findings, Herrera's procedures and discoveries are contrasted with a resource that discusses the sociology

[15] Ibid., 10.
[16] Ibid., 10-11.
[17] Miranda, 30.

of music and its application to Mexican music of the Revolutionary and Post-Revolutionary period: Iris Kaphan's *Change in cultural context and musical style: a connective process formulated and applied to the Mexican Revolution and Mexican music*. After surveying general sociological aspects of Mexican music, Kaphan focuses on the works of Ponce and his contemporaries, providing a more inclusive and diverse acquaintance with Ponce's procedural methods.

Ponce's compositional practice has traditionally been seen as favoring nationalist tendencies. This affinity towards Mexican music developed as he matured as a composer, increasing the desire to incorporate elements from his homeland during his early twenties. Herrera considers that as early as 1904 Ponce began seeing his work as forming part of a "larger national endeavor."[18] However, this vision might have been further expanded as a result of his first European trip. While his studies in Europe provided him with a positive stimulant in the Friedenthal collection of Mexican folk-songs given to him by his fellow classmates, they also raised awareness in the young Ponce of the disembodied state of Mexican music, and consequently of the European perspective that regarded not only its music, but 'Mexico' the country as inferior. There was obviously then, a need to elevate the country's artistic standards, which would consequently result in international recognition.[19] To Ponce's advantage, his compositional stance had an equivalent social parallel through the renewed philosophies of several anti-positivist Mexican thinkers. The continued rejection of the Díaz dictatorship was gaining momentum during the early 20th century, leading to inevitable sociological changes. Theorists like Alfonso Reyes, Daniel Cosío Villegas, and José Vasconcelos were promoting a more nationalistic approach intended to distance Mexican society from the pro-Europeanized views that had played an instrumental role

[18] Herrera, 16.
[19] Ibid., 24.

in the governmental policies of the Díaz administration. Ponce did not acquire his social views from any of these authors in particular, but rather fed his tendencies from the increased and generalized notion which promoted a nationalist vision.[20] Clema Ponce noted that "no one said to Manuel Ponce, 'Make Mexican music.' This concept was in the air, it was in the spirit of everyone."[21] The force behind Ponce's thinking was therefore to construct an 'ideology of rescue'[22] that would not only foster personal recognition, but also a more appreciative judgment of the value of Mexican music.

As described in Chapter 2, the building blocks of Ponce's philosophical stance were formed by a two part process that involved (1) the recollection and preservation of folk and popular materials from all parts of the country and (2) the creation of a treasury of this music which would serve as material for him and other composers to use as basic elements in the creation of national Art music.[23] Ponce clearly described the possible outcome of this process: "Out of those remote melodies, from those *sones*, languid or vibrant, soulful or spirited, Mexican music could be born one day, at the breath of a genius composer, stylized in modern forms in which would be captured not only the simple melodies, but the atmosphere they can create."[24]

The next step undertaken by Ponce was to begin writing works that incorporated the traditional Mexican elements he had collected. In this respect, the *Concierto Romántico* may be seen as the first work where Ponce's nationalist ideology played a decisive role in the compositional process. However, the high degree of sophistication and the natural subtlety in which this was done has kept the piece from being regarded primarily as a nationalistic work. A more descriptive depiction of how Ponce incorporated

[20] Ibid., 17.
[21] Clema Maurel de Ponce, 20. Quoted in Herrera, 18.
[22] Herrera, 7.
[23] Ibid., 46.
[24] Manuel M. Ponce. "Anarquía en nuestra música folklórica" in *El Universal*, 20 February, 1926. *Manuel M. Ponce notes*. Quoted in Herrera, 46.

Mexican elements into the concerto, and the specific conformation of these elements will be conducted later in this chapter.

In the compositional process of the *Concierto Romántico*, Ponce was not openly explicit about his nationalist intentions as he was in other works that followed the *Concierto*. This was primarily because his audience was mainly composed of elitist Mexican groups that still favored Europeanist tendencies and generally disfavored the use of traditional Mexican music. Such factors explain the success of the premiere of the *Concierto Romántico*, as the presence of Mexican elements, in comparison to the highly visible Europeanized influence, was barely noticeable. This opinion is consistent with Kaphan's view, which asserts that

> in making his choice of solutions, the composer is subject to social pressure from his subculture, to conform to its norms, values and rankings. A subculture can reward its members with whatever power, privilege, and prestige it controls. It can punish them by withholding peer approval, or even by more tangible deprivations, such as access to performance opportunities.[25]

This demonstrates the process through which Ponce successfully held true to his favorable nationalist inclinations while conjunctly gaining the audience's approval by incorporating European models. As Ponce became more openly nationalistic, he described the unusual reaction that his works generated in the Mexican public:

> When in those now distant days I took on the challenge of preserving and dignifying popular songs, I was accused of making music that smelled like *huaraches*.[26] Almost all the composers… gave their works names in French. The day that I played my *Rapsodia Mexicana* [Mexican Rhapsody] in my concerts, there was at first, perhaps, even a hostile environment… As the work progressed, the listeners were disoriented, but at the conclusion, opinion was unanimous and the triumph was a fact. The popular music had conquered a place in the salons. And since then, the *china poblana* and the *mariachi* touch elbows and smile with the grand dames and the gentlemen who wear tuxedos and speak in French.[27]

[25] Kaphan, 107.

[26] Yolanda Moreno Rivas. "Manuel M. Ponce" in *Los Grandes Maestros de la Música Clásica,* Segunda Serie 18, 11. Quoted in Herrera, 30.

[27] Clema Maurel de Ponce, 81. Quoted in Herrera, 30.

According to Herrera, the European tendency to incorporate folk elements into music during the Romantic era helped legitimize the inclusion of traditional sources in Ponce's compositions. In 1914 he mentioned the following: "I express the desire that, similar to that which Grieg, Brahms, Dvorak, Glinka, and so many others in Europe have done, we dignify in Mexico our popular songs, thus giving its own character to our national art."[28] He also sensed that without the incorporation of these elements to his compositional style, personal recognition could not be achieved, for he defined a great musician as "he who expresses himself perfectly in a language appropriate to his geography and his ethnicity, and whose complete evolution is not accomplished without personal identification with the musical genius of his race."[29]

Ponce's justification of his nationalist project through European precedents not only gained him acceptance and recognition, but in fact transformed the public's view in such a way that it eventually became "patriotic and artistic to appropriate and embellish traditional music from non elite social classes in Mexico,"[30] a process Herrera terms as "internal cultural mercantilism."[31] However, his ultimate goal of changing the still Europeanized style of Mexican music led him to search for a more manifest identity that he deemed the 'national soul.' Ponce was aware of the problem surrounding such a quest, stating that "in almost one hundred years of autonomous life our governments, and following their lead, our intellectuals and artists, have never been concerned with the creation of a national soul."[32] Exactly what was meant by a 'national soul' can be found in the theories of Justo Sierra, who claimed that "Mexicans were the progeny of two races, born of the Conquest, with Spanish and indigenous origin. This evolution of

[28] Ibid., 31. Quoted in Herrera, 32.
[29] Ibid., 97. Quoted in Herrera, 32.
[30] Herrera, 15.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Clema Maurel de Ponce, 105. Quoted in Herrera, 33.

Mexican people was the central historical theme and gave the country its 'soul.'"[33] This theory adheres to the rising importance of the *Mestizo* in Mexican society. The term *Mestizo* refers to the mixture of Spanish and Indian (in some regions Spanish and Negro) lineage, which was a direct result of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, in 1521.[34] This allusion to the significance of the *Mestizo* race is further referenced through Andrés Molina Enríquez, who wrote: "the *Mestizos*, by dissolving the Creole classes and absorbing all social groups could create the 'true nationality', 'strong and powerful,' with 'one life' and 'one soul.'"[35] *Mestizos* were only one of the races that compose Mexican society, the other two being *Criollos* and Indians. The term *Criollo* refers to a Caucasian born in Mexico of pure Spanish lineage, but it can also connote someone with a 'highly Europeanized culture.' An Indian is an individual that descended from any of the numerous tribes and cultures in the area of pre-Hispanic Mexico, although the term also implies adherence to Indian language, costumes, customs, and traditional economic activities.[36] Ponce, like other intellectuals of his time, chose the *Mestizo* as his source for the 'national soul.' In this context, it is important to analyze why Ponce made this choice and felt that the *Criollos* or the Indians were not as representative of the Mexican society he intended to glorify in his music.

Herrera states that "Ponce held the essence of Mexican music and its aesthetic soul to be found in *el pueblo*."[37] The *pueblo* was composed of Indians and *Mestizos*, but Ponce considered Mexican music as originating in the middle of the 18th century, thus having *Mestizo* origins, not Indian. There are several reasons why Ponce did not favor Indian culture or music as a source for his nationalist ideology. Kaphan assesses that

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[33] Henry C. Schmidt. *The Roots of Lo Mexicano: Self and Society in Mexican Thought, 1900-1934* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1978), 44. Quoted in Herrera, 32-33.

[34] Kaphan, 117.

[35] Andrés Molina Enríquez. *Los Grandes Problemas Nacionales* (México D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1978), 48. Quoted in Herrera, 33.

[36] Kaphan, 117.

[37] Herrera, 38.

"for many, the Indian was a potent symbol, both as a contemporary figure that had been severely oppressed, and as a part of an indigenous, pre-Columbian culture. Others felt that the Indian was a poor symbol for a country looking ahead towards modernization and unification."[38] Ponce was likely in the latter group, showing certain disregard for Indian civilizations. Although he recognized that Indian culture was not without merit, he considered it violent and inferior to the more civilized European societies. He illustrated this point in a speech on the history of Mexican music: "While the idolatrous peoples sacrificed thousands of human beings to cruel and insatiable gods, with the accompaniment of barbaric harmonies, in Rome a noble patrician prepared the work he would carry to a good end, when his relevant virtues and merits led him to the throne of Saint Peter under the name of Gregory I."[39] In addition to Ponce's generally unfavorable view of Indian culture, the analysis he undertook of Indian music led him to conclude that it was underdeveloped, making it impossible to create harmony due to the limited number of notes that Indian instruments could produce. Ponce associated pentatonicism with this music; however, this element is far removed from what he considered Mexican music and, actually, more closely related to Asian or African music.[40] As such, he believed these limitations could not provide a rich source for the national collection of music he was trying to assemble. Moreover, after considering the alienation of Indian tribes in the cultural life of the country, Ponce determined that their music was known only regionally and therefore could not represent Mexican culture in its totality.[41] However, many years later, Ponce became more willing to openly incorporate Indian references in his works, an example of which is the '*chirimía*' melody of his symphonic poem *Ferial*. He also explored Indian musical elements in pieces like *Canto y Danza de*

[38] Kaphan, 139-140.
[39] Manuel M. Ponce. "El carácter de la música mexicana" in *Vázquez Archives, Manuel M. Ponce Notes I.* Quoted in Herrera, 36.
[40] Herrera, 39.
[41] Ibid., 40.

los Antiguos Mexicanos [Chant and Dance of the Old Mexicans], but his constrained and limited acceptance of this music always prevented him from considering himself as an indigenist.[42]

When Ponce selected the *pueblo* as the source for his inspirations, he was implying a rejection towards the upper elite classes, the *Criollos*. In a sense, Ponce thought of these people as being "unbearably deformed by foreign influence."[43] Ponce's aversion towards the upper classes presents a seemingly irreconcilable ideological contradiction. While he was of *Mestizo* origin, Ponce had all the benefits of the upper classes, including extensive travel and the opportunity to educate himself in Europe. He, as many of the *Criollos*, had been influenced by these life experiences and his early musical style was largely regarded as an extension of European Romanticism. However, Ponce's humble origins and the opportunity to become more familiarized with the music of the lower classes, allowed him to resolve this inner conflict by distancing himself from the early European tendencies in his oeuvre and searching for a more Mexicanist approach in his craft. This search coincided with an extremely unstable period in Mexican history, as the country moved away from the thirty-four year long Porfirio Díaz dictatorship into the Mexican Revolution, a phase of prolonged political imbalance and power struggle. It is important to note that the *Concierto Romántico* was completed in September of 1910, two months before the initial hostilities. As such, it would be disingenuous to think that the rising tensions leading up to the armed conflict did not affect Ponce's compositional process. Nonetheless, Herrera states that it would be "a mistake to attribute Nationalism directly to the crisis of the Mexican Revolution."[44] It would be more accurate, however, to consider Mayer-Serra's view, which regarded the Revolution as playing an indirect role in the evolution of Mexican Nationalism. Mayer-

[42] Ibid., 38.
[43] Ibid., 41.
[44] Ibid., 19.

Serra believes that "a strong ideological, non-musical impetus was needed… to reach a new position. This was provided by the Revolution of 1910."[45] Thus, it should be noted that even though the Revolution cannot be considered as a leading cause of Mexican musical nationalism, it did create a transitional turning point leading to that direction. For Ponce, the *Concierto Romántico* represents the beginning of this transitional period. It can be seen as an experimental work in which, for the first time, Ponce incorporated both Mexican musical elements and a complex representation of the ideological and sociological struggles of pre-revolutionary Mexico. These intricate and more abstract elements have remained hidden, lying dormant beneath the seemingly trivial 'Romantic' nature of the work.

6.4 Sociological Interpretation of the *Concierto Romántico*

A sociological interpretation of the *Concierto Romántico* can only be conducted after an extensive analytical examination of the work's compositional elements and a profound understanding of the composer's social philosophy. The empirical nature of such an analysis is based on the question of how society affects the representative composer, and in what way does his response affect the composition of the music. The composer's response contains both musical and extra-musical meaning. Attempting to develop such an interpretation is an extremely personal assessment. The composition's meaning can only be supported through convincing evidence and should be based on assertive principles. In this context, the term 'meaning' refers not only to 'that which is expressed or indicated', but an 'end, purpose or significance.'[46] An even more encompassing definition can be that of philosopher Morris Raphael Cohen, which defines 'meaning' as that which "is connected or refers to, something beyond itself, so

[45] Otto Mayer-Serra. *The Present State of Music in Mexico* (Washington, D.C.: General Secretariat of Organization of American States, 1946), 35.

[46] Kaphan, 36.

that its full nature points to and is revealed in that connection."[47] An interactive definition of musical meaning therefore involves the understanding of the ability to indicate something beyond itself, and addresses whether the location of such meaning is to be found in the actual music, the subject's apprehension, or the surrounding context.[48]

In the case of Ponce's *Concierto Romántico*, it is my belief that the work is rich in extra-musical content, and that its meaning can be found not only through an analysis of the actual music, but can also be inferred through an assimilation of Ponce's principles and beliefs, which, as has been explained, were themselves a product of the socio-historic context of the pre-revolutionary Mexican society in which he was living and composing.

The most recognizable factor of an sociological interpretation focuses on the music's direct, observable elements. Through the information gathered in Chapter 3, it can be safely concluded that there is a generalized critical opinion that the concerto's thematic contents derive (1) from European models (such as the highly discussed influential relationship of Ponce to Lisztian virtuosity, as well as to other composers, such as Chopin and Franck) and (2) from Mexican elements (primarily descriptive commentary identifying musical sections as "Mexican sounding", or suggestive of Mexican songs and dances). The nature of these references, which make connections to definite and distinct musical associations, adequately coincides with Kaphan's view, which points out that "the most obvious procedure by which music points to external music is direct or indirect quotation. The borrowed material might either remain completely intact, in effect putting quotation marks around it, or it might be distorted within some recognizable limits."[49] In this case, there is an important amount of 'distortion', but not enough to prevent the classification of the thematic components as

[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 38.
[49] Ibid., 41.

clearly deriving from the models described above. While the recognition and classification of these components leaves little room for speculation, the compositional combination of these seemingly noncronguent elements raises many questions. This juxtaposition creates the need for a deeper and more meaningful relation, which derives from the connection between the symbolism of the musical elements and their possible source.[50] In terms of the musical associations, the only certainty is that the concerto's compositional components appear to be both 'foreign' and 'domestic.' While the origins of the 'foreign' elements have been amply documented, those of the 'domestic' have not. By this, it is implied that terms like 'Mexican sounding' or 'Mexican songs and dances' are shallow descriptions that do not provide information about the specific origins of these musical elements. This is especially noticeable after observing the fact that the term 'Mexican' can refer to music of *Criollo*, *Mestizo*, or Indian origin, or perhaps even a combination of them. However, the specificity of Ponce's 'Mexican' sources is not found in any of the current referential information that exists on the *Concierto Romántico*. This provides the opportunity for a more profound search to determine not only the components of the 'domestic' sources, but to integrate their presence into a more generalized musicological approach.

A second type of designative meaning is that of non-musical associations. This connection, indirect and highly abstract, is defined as a "symbol (that) does not depend for its utility on recognizable resemblance to what it represents... (Therefore) meaning can still be concrete and referential, but is now mediated by a code."[51] In regard to the *Concierto Romántico*, I believe it is possible to find such a "code" through the analytical findings of Joel Almazán Orihuela. As described previously, Almazán's article argues that all the thematic components of the work are based on derivations, permutations,

[50] Ibid., 42.
[51] Ibid., 43-44.

and extensions of three main motivic cells, all of which appear in the melody and accompaniment of the initial theme of the concerto (present in the "Allegro Appassionato" section). If this carefully devised process of thematic integration is to be identified as the "code", its accuracy must first be corroborated at a musical level. In this regard, Almazán provides numerous credible examples as evidence to successfully validate these claims and confirm his theory. In turn, if this observation is precise, the presence of the "code" must then be able to equally translate to a non-musical interpretative level. This leads to a reconsideration of the initial musical associations, which were identified as "foreign" and "domestic." The initial focus addresses the "domestic" elements. As mentioned earlier, these are said to contain "Mexican" components of some type, and were described as appearing in the sections headed "Andantino Amoroso" and "Allegretto." A basic assumption needs to be undertaken at this point. Because these are recognizable musical elements, their association with the three different social groups that comprise Mexican society should also be easily determined. Through both musical knowledge and intuition, the resulting hypothesis is as follows: the sections in question do contain "Mexican" elements in general, but closer study reveals that in fact the "Andantino Amoroso" section can be identified as belonging to the category of *Mestizo* music, while the "Allegretto" section is more reminiscent of Indian music.[52] This conclusion in turn leads to the observation that, while Ponce is making use of two components of "Mexican" music, he has decided to omit *Criollo* music as a basic thematic constituent of the first movement. However, in this regard it is inevitable to make a connection to the fact that *Criollo* music, following the natural sociological behavior of that group, is in fact the most Europeanized, the most "foreign." As such, it can be determined that in actuality the presence of "foreign" elements as

[52] Details on the musical evidence and conclusions leading to these assertions will be fully explained in the consequent analysis of each section.

thematic components in the *Concierto Romántico* is nonexistent, and that these are formed exclusively of "domestic" ones, one which is extremely "foreign" in nature, but "domestic" after all. This hypothesis can be substantiated through the non-musical application of Almazán's "code". The only common denominator, or social referent found between the *Mestizos*, Indians, and *Criollos*, is that they form the makeup of modern Mexican society, derived from the Spanish Conquest in 1521. The "code" therefore symbolizes the Conquest, an event out of which these social groups were created, and whose musical representation can be seen through the motivic integration that is present in all three thematic components. Since the Conquest was undertaken by Spain, the main motivic components of the entire concerto appear in the initial "Allegro Appassionato" section, which can be seen as representing the direct genetic relation of Spaniards to their *Criollo* descendants, as well as the high degree of Europeanization exemplified by this social group. To further demonstrate the likelihood of such a sociological interpretation, the following sections attempt to expand on the presented hypothesis, providing more detailed explanations to the specific movements of the work and the different sections that comprise them. This process is supported through the integration of the musical findings derived from the analyses in Chapter 5 and Ponce's philosophical postulates as seen through the work of both Herrera and Kaphan.

6.4.1 The *Concierto Romántico*'s First Movement

6.4.1.1 The "Allegro Appassionato" Section

The first section of the concerto, headed "Allegro Appassionato," presents a theme whose stylistic influences have been traced directly to specific musical examples of Franz Liszt, as seen in the previous chapter. The musical associations described in Chapter 3 additionally show that the unquestionable presence of those influences have led to a superficial designation of this section as "European music"— perhaps based on

the recognition of the composer's previously marked tendencies towards Romantic music of the second half of the 19th century. These observations have failed to see that the designation of Mexican music of "*Criollo*," or Europeanized origin, could have also been applied to characterize this particular section. This premise has to be applied since the current surface level identification of these existing elements as "foreign" did not yield a more profound interpretation that could overcome their cohesional abstractness and allow them to be integrated representatively and meaningfully into the work. The influence of Liszt and Romanticism in general can therefore be seen as the overwhelmingly pro-European views that were promoted by the elite *Criollo* groups in early 20th century Mexican society. Ponce the 'composer' was an adherent to these views, a factor that derived from (1) the early stage of his compositional development at that time, which had not led him to find a personal voice, (2) a sense of admiration and respect to these currents as a result of the influence exerted on him by his European education and the direct connection to Franz Liszt's student lineage through his studies with Martin Krause, and (3) an inner awareness that success and recognition in Mexico could only be achieved through the continued promotion and compositional subordinance to these models.

However, as previously seen, Ponce the 'individual' in fact antagonized with the *Criollo* elitist groups. This was a direct consequence of his need to make a deeper connection with the music of the common folk, which had resulted in his finding of the 'national soul' and consequently, a resulting indirect revulsion to *Criollo* musical standards. It is possible that Ponce purposely designed the work so that his intended meaning would not coincide with that bestowed by society.[53] Consequently, the meaning of this theme, and the subsequent section is not designative in nature, as it has been

[53] Kaphan, 55.

described, but rather allusive. The “Allegro Appassionato” theme can thus be seen to symbolize the *Criollo* as a member of a post-Conquest Mexican society.

The B section of this movement further emphasizes *Criollo* presence by exemplifying the controlling force these groups exerted on the societal standards of the country, especially during the Díaz dictatorship. The latter idea can be clearly understood through Herrera’s concept of ‘internal colonialism.’ This notion refers to the precept that international colonialism has a definite influence in the creation of national elites, who in turn apply the use of local monopolies as a process to gain access to foreign cultural capital, developing local hegemonic relations.[54] Its direct application lies in the underlying dominance exerted by *Criollo* groups as an intermediary force that coped with the political imbalance that arose between Mexico and Europe after the former gained its Independence in 1821.[55] The purpose of this *Criollo* dominance was to “renegotiate their position between the First World cultural and intellectual standards and above the other social classes within Mexico.”[56] Such internal colonialism, Herrera concludes, constituted an asymmetrical power relation between independent groups whose separation was maintained through racial, gendered, or other mechanisms.[57]

The B section, as Almazán accurately illustrates, is in fact ‘developmental’ in nature, deriving its contents from the initial motivic elements presented in the “Allegro Appassionato” theme. It is imperative in this respect to note Ponce’s musical treatment. As explained in Chapter 5, this section stands on its own in regard to the overall form of the movement. It is rigorously organized in four sub-sections (b1, b2, b3, and b4), two of which reappear in the second B section of the movement (b2 and b3). As such, Ponce institutes a highly unusual type of standardized, recurring development— an extremely

[54] Herrera, 13.
[55] Ibid, 12.
[56] Ibid., 13.
[57] Ibid.

unorthodox process in sonata-rondo or for that matter, in any other form that incorporates developmental elements as part of its structure. Sociologically, the B section therefore represents the systematization of pro-European tendencies undertaken by the *Criollos* as a means to preserve the existing conditions of 'internal colonialism' in Mexico.

In terms of the *Concierto Romántico*'s first movement, these sociological interpretations show consistency with their corresponding musical equivalents. The most visible parallel is that of the movement's form. As a loosely developed sonata-rondo, the thematic contents are inevitably linked to the natural asymmetry that results from such form. The basic components of standard rondo form assert that the initial section will have more prominence than the episodes (an example of which could be 'ABACABA'), thus creating, within the overall 'symmetrical' shape of the form, asymmetrical relations in the sense that the A section will occur a total of four times, the B section two times, and the C section only one time. In the case of the *Concierto Romántico*'s first movement, the form was found to be 'ABACDBA' (with the C section making a second appearance at the end of the Finale second movement). The overall asymmetry of traditional rondo form is further distorted by Ponce in this movement: the A section appears three times, the B section two times, and the C and D sections only one time. The fact that five out of seven sections in the movement are representative of the *Criollos* and their institutionalized dominance in Mexican society constitutes an accurate depiction of the latter stages of the Porfirian era in which power unbalance and the uneven distribution of wealth were the norm, creating a breakdown of the republic's frail democratic establishments and furthering tensions that in turn would lead to a prolonged armed conflict.

Tonality is another aspect that provides further complementary support to these sociological readings. The *Criollo* and its dominance are represented by the key of F-

Sharp Minor. The entire “Allegro Appassionato” section revolves around this tonality, with the A section beginning the concerto in that key and the B section continuing this tonal trend. The preponderance of F-Sharp Minor and its surrounding sociological interpretation as the equivocal direction in which the country was headed during the Díaz presidency is interestingly supported by the new motive that emerges in the fourth sub-section of B. This motive, as described previously, is in fact a minor key presentation of what eventually will become the main theme of the C section, the *Mestizo* theme. Its initial surfacing in the b4 sub-section can be interpreted as the intellectual response to *Criollo* dominance and the distressed need to modify these tendencies through the creation of the ‘national soul’, with the ensuing establishment of the *Mestizo* as the medium for such representation.

Noteworthy to mention are the tonal inferences established by the endings of the first two A sections. These sections ascertain the “Allegro Appassionato” theme as the main motivic and thematic component of this movement and reinforce the tonality of F-Sharp Minor, which clearly was harmonically defined throughout the initial three sections of the work (ABA). However, Ponce fails to include a strong F-Sharp Minor cadence at the end of both A sections, which instead conclude on half cadences in C-Sharp Major. In addition, the final cadence of the B section is elided with the return of the A section. The notorious lack of cadential support to further emphasize F-Sharp Minor indicates Ponce’s reticence to establish it as the main tonality of the work. This is also compliant with its sociological equivalent, as Ponce recognized the enormous social implications of *Criollo* supremacy in Mexican way of life, but refused to accept them as the model to achieve a more economically balanced and socially integrated culture. Ending the A sections on half-cadences raises a social question, creating uncertainty to whether *Criollo* dominance can be perpetuated in the future.

6.4.1.2 The “Andantino Amoroso” Section

The “Andantino Amoroso” provides a clearly defined contrast to the extensive dramatic statement that occurs in the first three sections of the work. This is not only the first section of the movement to be in a slower tempo, but also the first one to present a change of key, from F-Sharp Minor to A Major. These contrasting elements function not only out of musical necessity, giving the soloist physical rest and providing a change of character typical of sonata-rondo form, but also have significant consequences in the proposed sociological design of the piece. As mentioned earlier, this “Andantino Amoroso” has been found to resemble a “Mexican song.” While its origins have been traced to the category of *Mestizo* music, it is important to further develop this assertion. The *Mestizo* was seen as “the embodiment of a successful [combination] of Mexico’s multiple cultures,”[58] and as such, it is not surprising to find a certain degree of romanticized Europeanization within the more folk-like Mexican qualities of this theme. In fact, such compositional practices were a standardized process in Ponce’s work. This can be understood through his illustrious quotation that adorns his tomb at the National Cemetery: “I consider it the duty of all Mexican composers to ennoble the music of their Fatherland by giving it artistic form, reclothing it in polyphony and lovingly preserving the popular melodies which are the expression of the national soul.”[59] Through this vision, Ponce was able to depict raw Mexican folk elements by elevating their quality and reaching a higher degree of musical aesthetics. His ultimate purpose was to create a category of Art which would exist above and beyond the struggles of individuals and nations.[60] As such, the incorporation and advancement of national music to the level of Art should not be seen as “reinscription in European paradigms, but rather, participation

[58] Kaphan, 140.
[59] Manuel M. Ponce. “La música y la canción mexicana.” Quoted in Moreno Rivas, *Rostros del Nacionalismo*, 102.
[60] Herrera, 49.

on equal terms in the creation of universal music."[61] This practice derived and was unmistakably tied to the nationalistic endeavor on which Ponce embarked through the documenting and harmonizing of traditional melodies— an indispensable part of his nationalist philosophy. Héctor Rojas[62] elaborates on this notion, contending that there are three main traits characteristic of Ponce's nationalistic music. He identifies these as (1) the harmonization of existing popular songs, (2) the inclusion of such melodies in his music, and (3) the creation of his own language within the native rhythms and melodies.[63] The "Andantino Amoroso" theme belongs to this last category, as Ponce drew on his own musical idiom to represent the embodiment of the *Mestizo* as the 'national soul.'

This view contrasts with the one non-musical reference found regarding this section. In his review of the *Concierto Romántico*, John Duarte describes the "Andantino Amoroso" as "a Mexican love song in which the advances of the pretender, initially tender, increasingly become more fiery and passionate."[64] Although Duarte's portrayal of this section is feasible, the inconsequential nature of his general assessment viewing the concerto mainly as 'European music written by a Mexican composer' subtracts validity to his claims. A more profound interpretation would be that the "Andantino Amoroso" symbolizes (1) the representation of the *Mestizo* as a recognizable and essential member of post-Conquest Mexican society and (2) Ponce's zealous desire to make this social group the basis for the future development of Mexican culture.

The implied confirmation of the *Mestizo* as the preferential source in Ponce's social aspirations is further strengthened by the choice of key. The most obvious attribute of this section is the change from the more somber key of F-Sharp Minor to the

[61] Ibid.
[62] Héctor Rojas: Mexican pianist. He has recorded the *Concierto Romántico* and the entire solo piano output of Manuel M. Ponce.
[63] Héctor Rojas. *Manuel M. Ponce: Obra Completa para Piano.* Digital disc. Sony Music Entertainment Mexico, CDEC7 486228 (1998), 65.
[64] Duarte, 3.

more optimistic A Major. The choice of A Major seems musically convenient as it is not only a diatonic key in the tonality of F-Sharp Minor (scale degree III) but is in fact the relative major of that key. F-Sharp minor, symbolic of the *Criollos* and their dominance, is a key belonging to the Porfirian era, where power imbalance and racial segregation prevented the rise of a true Mexican culture. The key of A Major is representative of the need to socially and musically head in a new direction, more inclusive of the different social groups and more nationalistic in nature.

The overall size of the section and its single appearance in this movement is also coherent with the role that *Mestizos* played in Porfirian society. During this period, the uniqueness of *Mestizo* culture was not fully appreciated and this racial group was seen as inferior to the *Criollos*, who undertook major governmental policy decisions. The appearance of this section is Ponce's acknowledgment of the unfavorable historical situation of the *Mestizo* race and his refusal to accept it as their ultimate fate. This will be observed and described more explicitly in the return of the "Andantino Amoroso" theme in the *Coda* of the Finale.

6.4.1.3 The "Allegretto" Section

The "Allegretto" section of this movement has been identified as reminiscent of Mexican music with Indian characteristics. In itself, this is both remarkable and unexpected, as Ponce was known for not favoring Indian tendencies in his music, especially at this early stage of his compositional development. Kaphan notes that "drawing upon native Mexican music was atypical, even at times of strong nationalism, until after the Revolution."[65] In terms of the concerto's thematic content, Ponce represented the *Criollo* in the A and B sections, and the *Mestizo* in the C section. Therefore, if his purpose was to create an accurate and comprehensive portrayal of 20th

[65] Kaphan, 194.

century Mexican society, as this sociological interpretation suggests, Indians had to be included as well. The uncovering of the possible musical meaning thus serves to explain an apparent contradiction in the composer's philosophy. As with the other main thematic contents of the concerto, Ponce's incorporation of Indian elements was done with natural refinement and intricacy, factors which have prevented the "Allegretto" section from being regarded as inclusive of Indian components.

An additional point to consider is that although Ponce was not an indigenist, he was not completely indifferent to the general contributions of Indian culture and music. Kaphan notes that, for many Mexicans, Indian music seemed to be the most nationalistic, for it was the least European in nature. She further states that pre-Conquest culture had high value as a national symbol and Pre-Columbian art was greatly respected for its aesthetic qualities.[66] Kaphan concludes that in fact the Indian was an important new nationalist symbol, mainly as a result of Benito Juárez (1806-1872)— a hero, reformer, and president of the republic who was of Indian origin himself.[67] The result of the Indian as an emerging symbol was further depicted in the country's musical heritage, with works like Aniceto Ortega's opera about the last *Aztec* prince *Guatimotzin*, and a piano potpourri titled *Miscelanea Yucateca* [Yucatecan Miscellanea]. Despite this slight innovative trend, Kaphan concludes that this re-creation and incorporation of Indian music into serious Art music remained highly underdeveloped, for traditional elements "were quickly clothed in conventional musical styles, Indian scales were smoothed into western scales, and irregular meters were converted into regularly accented rhythms with unchanging meters."[68] While this is partially true of the *Concierto Romántico*'s "Allegretto", Ponce in fact decided to maintain the irregular meter and the extended syncopation characteristic of Indian music. This is

[66] Ibid., 200.
[67] Ibid., 194.
[68] Ibid., 195.

highly consistent with Kaphan's view, in which she mentions that "another characteristic Ponce found in Indian music was metric and rhythmic irregularity. He illustrated this in a description of a song with a text half Castillian and half *Tarascan*; the Indian words create irregularities of rhythm and accent that are reflected in the accompanying music."[69] The uncharacteristic time signature of 5/4 makes this "Allegretto" one of the very few examples, if not the only one, in Romantic piano concerto literature to contain such a time signature. The feeling of abundant syncopation contained in the piano's right hand part is perhaps lessened by both the slow-moving tempo of this section and the essential need for *rubato*, factors which prevent the listener from openly identifying the highly irregular nature of the music. Both Pablo Castellanos and Yolanda Moreno Rivas described this section as being "suggestive of a tropical dance."[70] This assessment however, seems to contradict the well-defined nostalgic and reflective character of the music. The "Allegretto" is unpretentious in its manifest simplicity. It is representative of the Indian culture longing for the traditions that were lost after the Conquest and the melancholic need to go back to their ancient roots. The middle section of the "Allegretto" becomes more involved as the piano figurations increase to a more Romanticized-type of intensity, perhaps symbolizing the overwhelming *Criollo* influence and their disdain towards Indian culture. At the end however, there is a return to the tranquil "Allegretto" theme, this time more distant and evocative, with the accompaniment of an English Horn. This serene statement might represent the subdued acceptance of the Indian to the hostile reality of the Porfirian era, where oppression and indifference to their cultural traditions were characteristic.

The length of this section reflects conditions that Indian cultures faced in post-Conquest Mexican society. They were denigrated to the lowest class standards and had

[69] Ibid., 207.
[70] Yolanda Moreno Rivas. *Rostros del Nacionalismo*, 95.

little or no effect in governmental policy making. Since Indians were the least representative group in Mexican culture, the “Allegretto” section is consequently the smallest one of the first movement, being only twenty-eight measures long. As the middle section (D) in the overall sonata-rondo design, it is the only one that is not repeated (the “Andantino Amoroso” section also appears only once in the first movement, but it acquires unusual importance when it reappears to close the concerto at the end of the second movement). The choice of key also seems to coincide with Ponce’s social beliefs. The “Allegretto” is in A Major, the same key as the *Mestizo* “Andantino Amoroso” section. In this regard, it is important to remember that Ponce’s ideology differentiated between *el pueblo* and the elite. In the *Concierto Romántico*’s first movement, the key of F-Sharp Minor thus symbolizes the *Criollo* elite while the key of A Major is representative of *el pueblo*, conformed by both *Mestizos* and Indians. While Ponce did not favor the Indian culture as representative of the ‘national soul’, he was sympathetic to the suffering and hardship that Indians had endured since the time of Spanish Colonial rule up to the repressive Díaz dictatorship. The “Allegretto” is therefore representative of Indian culture and their distressed existence in modern Mexican society as they encompassed the lowest spectrum of the social class system.

6.4.1.4 The Solo Cadenza

The sociological reading gathered from the general form of the concerto’s first movement (ABACDBA), is that it serves the purpose of introducing and depicting each of the three social groups representative of Mexican society as a whole. In exchange, the cadenza, which interestingly enough serves to close the movement, illustrates the state of coexistence within those groups during the Porfirian era. The cadenza seems to be a suitable section to describe such social relations, for musically it is the place where the different thematic components of the movement are incorporated into one section, being

more extensively developed to display the soloist's abilities. Kaphan describes these associations, asserting that "once the relationship is established, music can manipulate the symbols to offer additional levels of meaning. Two themes can be combined to indicate an interaction between the objects or characters they represent."[71] The cadenza begins with the sextuplet sixteenth-note figurations that had introduced the solo part at the beginning of the concerto. It is appropriate to remember that this passage, which outlines a G-sharp half-diminished seventh chord with a ninth added (ii in the key of F-Sharp Minor) also delineates an A Major chord through the non-harmonic downbeats of each sextuplet (C-Sharp, A, E, etc.) (see Example 5.8). This ambiguous design, subtly hinting at bi-tonality, is therefore symbolic of the country's social makeup, inclusive of the elite *Criollo* groups (F-Sharp Minor) and the *pueblo*, embodied by *Mestizos* and Indians (A Major). It is also a miniature introduction to the overall body of the solo cadenza, which evokes more extensively the themes representative of each of those three social groups. Additionally, it is pertinent to note that in the initial presentation of this introduction (mm. 28-46), the sextuplet groups led to a long trill in the piano right hand part and a twelve measure extension of a C-Sharp Dominant Seventh chord that cadenced in F-sharp Minor. This time however, the C-Sharp Dominant Seventh Chord is left unresolved, as the soloist's right hand closes the trill on a half-cadence. This is primarily relevant because it answers the question posed earlier by Ponce in regard to whether *Criollo* groups could continue to assert future dominance in Mexican society. The lack of cadential closing to further establish the key of F-sharp Minor provides a negative answer, as the music soon moves into C-Sharp Minor (the dominant minor). The implications set by this new key in fact entail a modulation away from F-Sharp Minor, the minor 'v' chord serving as a pivot to modulate to A Major (iii). Through this modulation, the following two conclusions can be reached: (1) the failure to cadence in

[71] Kaphan, 46.

F-Sharp Minor musically strengthens the theory that the tonic key of the whole concerto is A Major, substantiating the basis of Ponce's social goals, and (2) this symbolic reading reinforces the notion that Ponce's ideological beliefs have become firmly established at this point of the work, heading away from the *Criollo* elite and fostering the emergence of the *pueblo*.

This can be readily seen in the next passage, as the *Mestizo* C theme is the first one to appear in the cadenza, decreasing the importance of the *Criollo* A theme which had been so extensively presented during the first movement. After two initial *Andante* phrases that remind the listener of the amorous character of the theme, a resolute statement headed *Allegro con Fuoco* explores the theme with more bravura, perhaps indicative of the *Mestizo*'s animosity towards the non-inclusive generalized sentiments of the *Criollos*. This phrase in turn leads to a restless and harmonically unsettled presentation of the *Criollo* A theme. The increased and furious sense of virtuosity, exemplified by the continuous use of tumultuous octaves, can be seen as the *Criollos*' enraged response to the threat posed by the *Mestizos* and their rising influence through the societal parameters that identified them as the 'national soul.' A more reflexive and somewhat improvisatory *Quasi Andante* returns to a more sorrowful statement of the *Mestizo* theme, which could represent a lament for the bellicose posture of the *Criollos* and reveals resentment for their inability to integrate more fully into society. Two concise and diffuse evocations of the Indian D theme complement this notion, ending the cadenza on a B half-diminished seventh chord that provides no sense of tonal closure.

The general reading of the cadenza is that it represents the failed state of racial integration that existed since the 1821 Mexican Independence, and which considerably deteriorated during the last stages of the Díaz presidency. It is noteworthy that throughout the movement there is an extremely limited sense of thematic integration between the A, C, and D components, and when this does occur briefly, like in the

cadenza, it seems to be confrontational in nature. As such, Ponce portrays the extreme isolation exemplified by each of the three social groups. The cadenza is thus indicative of Mexico as an 'imagined community.' This term, coined by American historian Benedict Anderson, describes nations as imagined communities because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings."[72] This is coherent with the intangible state of early 20th century Mexican society, in which racist class stratifications accounted for societal fragmentation that in turn would reach unacceptable social levels of discontent and result in the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

6.4.2 The *Concierto Romántico*'s Second Movement

6.4.2.1 The Finale's First "A" Section

The "Allegro" second movement of the *Concierto Romántico*, perhaps reflective of the tonal uncertainty that closed the solo cadenza, begins with a string pizzicato introduction that outlines an E7 dominant chord. The lack of a tonal center is reflective of the political inequality and worrisome conditions surrounding *Criollo* circles, as their disintegration coincided with the downfall of the Díaz presidency. This musical instability is nonetheless short lasting, for after only eight measures there is a strong cadence in A Major. The ensuing first theme of this Finale can be exemplified as the *Criollos*' desperate schematic approach to further secure the uncertain future of their 'internal colonialism' mechanisms by dishonestly adopting the traditions of the *pueblo*. This can

[72] Benedict Arnold. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 6.

be seen mainly through Ponce's choice of key, for as described previously, A Major was representative of both *Mestizos* and Indians.

While Ponce's personal desire to incorporate nationalistic elements into his work can be primarily regarded as a sincere and noble practice, the motivation behind those of the *Criollo* elite cannot. These groups pretended to sympathize with traditional Mexican elements and invoke them as a sense of national pride, but this was essentially a corrupt strategy to maintain their hegemony over the lower classes. It would seem unequivocal to conclude that Ponce was aware of these procedures as being representative of *Criollo* systematic control, as he was facing the quandary to portray his inner disproval of them while at the same time maintaining the elite cultural base that would guarantee his compositional success.

As such, Ponce's intricate methods again seem to promote the continuation of Romanticism in his music, although at a more profound level, they are in fact denouncing the *Criollo* groups that supported such models. Ponce's writing confirms this theory through the constant harmonic shifts not only in the first theme of this movement, but throughout most of the Finale. The adventurous and varied deviations of the harmony seem to exemplify Ponce's carefully planned process to avoid associating the key of A Major with the *Criollo* elites. By eradicating the key of F-Sharp Minor from the tonal design of the composition and advocating the key of A Major, representative of the *pueblo*, Ponce cautiously differentiates the *Mestizo* rise as a genuine emblematic symbol of Nationalism from the *Criollos*' disguise to uphold their faltering sense of control on societal standards. In fact, the sense of an A Major tonality seems to vanish completely in the B theme, as unusual and expansive harmonic progressions move away from that key to finally reach an elided cadence in G Minor (a distant key of A Major) that begins the middle section of the movement.

6.4.2.2 The Finale's "B" Section

The B section of the Finale, developmental in nature, is indicative of the inevitable upcoming racial struggle between the *Criollos* and the Indians that would in turn lead to the Mexican Revolution. Ponce was not immune from the rising political tensions developing towards the end of the Díaz presidency, and his return to Mexico in 1906 possibly strengthened the generalized feeling that the country was heading towards an armed conflict. The irreconcilable differences deriving from the *Criollo* influenced, repressive Díaz regime and the resulting social resentment of the Indian groups seem to be contained in this section. The music begins with a fugue-like imitative dialogue between the flutes and the bassoons. This style, more intricate and musically developed can be seen to represent the *Criollos*. This is reinforced through Zofia Lissa's view, which describes "the music of the elite classes— the feudal aristocracy and intelligentsia— as complex and difficult, reflecting the expertness of both musician and audience."[73] Its contrasting musical answer contains a syncopated chromatic ascent formed by consecutive unresolved seventh chords. This perhaps symbolizes the Indians and their unsettling posture, demanding respect and more equality in society. This musical interaction between *Criollos* and Indians is repeated two more times, ascending in fifths from G minor, to D minor, and concluding in A minor. This inordinate amount of repetitions asserts Ponce's disheartened view of the upcoming armed struggle and its nation-wide dimensions, as well as its long-lasting consequences for the future of the country.

[73] Zofia Lissa. "Musik und Revolution" in *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music,* V.1 (1974), 113-123. Quoted in Kaphan, 74.

6.4.2.3 The Finale's Second "A" Section and the *Coda*

The second "A" section of this movement, which musically serves as a return to the main theme, can be seen as both a deceptive musical and social resolution to the conflict, for it implies that *Criollos* would be in a position to continue asserting their dominance. However, this apparent resolution is again not confirmed tonally, as the section ends on another B-half diminished seventh chord. A more feasible reading of this reprise is that *Criollo* supremacy would result unless a solution reflective of more nationalistic approaches could be achieved through the armed conflict. In that regard, Ponce resorts to his personal beliefs to provide that answer: the embodiment of the *Mestizo* as the 'national soul', contained in the C theme of the first movement. This theme is presented in grandiose form in the *Coda* of the second movement, which also stands as the concerto's climax. Kaphan states that "individuals within a value system share a particular perspective from which they view events, actions, objects, or ideas. This perspective highlights some facts and makes others recede, while giving all of them intermediate value in relation to the governing value."[74] Thus, this inclusion provides not only musical closure by rounding out the incomplete form of the first movement, but symbolically asserts the *Mestizo* as the basic component of Ponce's social and musical philosophy, and the 'governing value' of the entire *Concierto Romántico*.

The surprising insertion of the *Mestizo*'s theme to close the work validates Ponce's social objectives. It confirms the existence of extra-musical associations and extends the work's overall musical meaning by enhancing its compositional merits. The *Concierto Romántico* should thus be seen not merely as a successful concert piece representative of Ponce's early style, but as a mature, substantial, and transformative creation: an authentic patriotic symbol inductive of social integration, change, and modernization.

[74] Kaphan, 52.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of Findings

The *Concierto Romántico* for Piano and Orchestra can be seen as a product derived from Ponce's assimilation of the nationalistic currents that were on the rise in early 20th century Mexico. Its creation can be seen as a symbolic reaction to the hostile musical reality of the 1800s. Of this time period, Otto Mayer-Serra writes: "The oppression and exploitation suffered by Mexican society from immemorial times affected the country's musical culture so profoundly, that by the 19th century the elements of an individual culture found themselves stilled and rarified to such extent that they barely transcended to a perceptible reality. The musical works written during this historic period are inspired solely on European standards and worked upon in slave-like imitation of Italian, and subsequently German and French models."[1] Ponce understood the historical connotation of his work, and realized that the emergence of a rich nationalistic tradition was necessary for the country's cultural development. He also comprehended that moving towards this goal was part of a gradual process, and that societal changes would not come upon easily. The *Concierto Romántico* represents Ponce's self-realization of this goal, creating a transition that links his early Romantic works with the more openly nationalistic compositions that followed. Ponce, through the experiences gained in his European trip, was aware of the inadequate state of development facing Mexican music, and the *Concierto Romántico*, being his first large-scaled composition, presented him with an ideal medium to incorporate both his improved musical knowledge and the rising

[1] Mayer-Serra. *Panorama de la música mexicana*, 74.

nationalistic postulates of his compositional philosophy. As such, the piece represents Ponce's attempt to achieve a higher degree of modernization in Mexican music, a factor that has been highly overlooked while referring to this work.

The generalized nature of the descriptive references found in Chapter 3 of this study confirms the above stated fact, revealing that most opinions in regard to the concerto have failed to provide profound analytical conclusions that go beyond the superficial appearances of the music. Even such a promoter of Ponce's music and in particular of the *Concierto Romántico* as Pablo Castellanos, fell short of determining the true significance of the work's implications. This can be seen primarily in his identifying the work as the most 'nationalistic' concerto found in the American continent and the Iberian Peninsula from the Romantic period. While Castellanos' assertion has potential for veracity, his analysis never goes beyond the surface-layer identification of Mexican musical components, failing to understand their origins and the surrounding sociological implication of their inclusion in the work.

The underestimation of the concerto's role in the development of Mexican musical nationalism and consequently in the nation's rising musical history is confirmed by the editorial research conducted in Chapter 4. The failure to create a purchasable, revised edition that truly honors the work's intrinsic worth and allows for its continued performance and promotion, accounts for the dismantled state of research that has maintained this masterpiece in obscurity for almost a century after its creation.

The work carried out by Joel Almazán Orihuela has much musical merit, and was inspirational to achieve an enhanced level of understanding of the piece. Almazán's findings, coupled with the discoveries of this treatise, allowed for an increased musical awareness that served as the basis for the musicological interpretation conducted in Chapter 6.

As described previously, the findings of this treatise corroborate, in contrast to the external appearance of the music, a sense of consistent and renewed musical modernization. Such a factor can be better understood through the concepts of 'homogeneity' and 'eclecticism,' as illustrated by both their musical and non-musical applications to this work.

7.2 Compositional Homogeneity and Eclecticism

The nature of the *Concierto Romántico*'s compositional homogeneity has been amply established throughout this study. It relates to the overt Romantic influence of the work and the particular music examples that were instrumental in its design. The most evident models for the creation of this work were found to be both of Liszt's piano concertos and the Sonata in B Minor. Traces to the piano concertos have been found in the easily observable musical elements, like the concerto's one-movement form and its cyclical design. The Sonata in B minor in turn provided the seed for the thematic inspiration of the entire work, and to a certain degree, its tonal design. Liszt's influence is also related to the sophisticated processes of thematic transformation found in the work. While of all the basic structural and thematic components have a link to the past, it is Ponce's musical treatment that establishes a sense of modernization, expressed through the distinct element of eclecticism that embodies such a large portion of his musical production. The most obvious type of eclecticism resides in the work's form. Its main design seems to be Ponce's original creation: a long first movement possessing a complex structure, followed by a lighthearted scherzo-like finale. There is no question that there is a certain degree of unorthodoxy in this form, but its reappearance six years later in Ponce's Second Piano Sonata confirms that the composer found it to be a feasible structure, as mentioned earlier. In the case of the *Concierto Romántico*, this format is blended into the previously established one-movement structure used by Liszt,

creating an entirely unique design. The cyclic nature of the work is also modeled on Liszt's music, perhaps more on his Second Piano Concerto, in A Major. In this work, Liszt achieves cyclic unity through the main theme's consistent transformations, all recognizable and achieved through processes of variation. In Ponce's concerto, the cyclical nature of the work can be readily observed through the identifiable return of the "Andantino Amoroso" theme at the end of the piece. At a much deeper level however, Ponce adopts Liszt's processes of thematic transformation and takes them a step forward. This is done not through perceptible variations of the theme itself (like in Liszt's case), but by new themes arising from transformations of the motivic components found in the A theme of the "Allegro Appassionato," itself derived from Liszt's B Minor Sonata (as described previously by both Castellanos and Almazán). Through this procedure, Ponce's work demonstrates the appearance of another eclecticism—the modification of Liszt's existing procedures into a different type of thematic transformation. The tonal design of the work also seems to have been inspired in Liszt's Sonata in B Minor. As noted earlier, this work begins with a certain degree of tonal uncertainty that is dissipated a few bars later with a cadence in the tonic B Minor key. In the case of the *Concierto Romántico*, at first hand there appears to be no sense of tonal ambiguity. The study realized in Chapter 5 confirmed the fact that the bi-tonal structure proposed by Almazán could in fact be better explained through Heinrich Schenker's concept of 'auxiliary-cadence.' As such, a closer analysis of the work indicated that Ponce carried the tonal vagueness found at the beginning of Liszt's B Minor Sonata to a more profound stage, modulating through the auxiliary cadence to F-Sharp Minor (the sixth scale degree of the tonic key A Major) and maintaining this tonal center for the entire first movement of the piece. The extremeness of this eclecticism can be seen as a modernistic approach to increase tonal ambiguity in the large-scale design and counteract the homogeneous harmonic procedures that occur at a more local level.

7.3 Sociological Homogeneity and Eclecticism

A dissemination of the references found in Chapter 3 of this treatise appear to indicate that the concerto is musicologically homogeneous, even being described as European music written by a Mexican composer. Despite the undeniable structural and stylistic European components that play such a significant role in the *Concierto Romántico* (and generally throughout Ponce's compositional output), the sociological interpretation carried out in Chapter 6 indicates that these elements can be seen to represent the systematic Europeanization of Mexican society that pervaded throughout the 19th century, up to the Revolution of 1910. As such, the sociological homogeneity of this piece is only apparent when perceived exclusively from a non-analytical perspective. In exchange, discoveries brought forth by this study once again highlight a series of eclectic traits. The social readings found in Chapter 6 find once again a homogenous precedent in two programmatic works for piano and orchestra by Franz Liszt: *Totentanz* and *De Profundis*. The existence of these works in addition to many other programmatic compositions in Liszt's output validate to a certain extent the possibility of Liszt's influence in the proposed sociological, or 'programmatic' reading of the *Concierto Romántico.* Ponce's eclectic practice resides in incorporating extra-musical meaning from those pre-established examples into a symphonic form, the genre which best describes both of Liszt's piano concertos and the *Concierto Romántico*. Another apparent eclectic trait is the juxtaposition and musical integration of European stylistic, structural, and harmonic elements with Mexican thematic components. While this type of eclecticism would later become such a pivotal part of Ponce's nationalistic works, the *Concierto Romántico* can be seen as the work where this ideology initially emerged. This unification of 'Europe' with 'America' had no other purpose than to reach a higher degree of musical aesthetics, a powerful art that could achieve universal consecration. In this regard, Kaphan states that "recent Western art culture has bestowed positive value on

originality and innovation, stylistic unity, and economy of means. Negative value has been assigned to non-integration of materials, to unvaried repetition, and to imitation of styles that are labeled as archaic or as typical of other composers."[2] Ponce was aware of these trends, and his eclectic treatment in the *Concierto Romántico* can be seen as an attempt to avoid having 'negative values' ascribed to his work. This leads to yet another eclecticism—the incorporation of musical representations of the three social groups that compose Mexican society (which can also be described as the first depiction in Mexican musical history of such sociological concurrence). This is consistent with Kaphan's view, which accounts for the possible inclusion of multiple social strata with one dominant layer as a factor of social and musical change.[3] In the case of the *Concierto Romántico*, Ponce combines, through the previously described compositional eclecticisms, two shifting dominant layers as a means to achieve social and musical change: the first one is the *Criollo* elite (represented by the tonality of F-Sharp Minor) and later the *pueblo*, embodied primarily through the rise of the *Mestizo* (denoted by A Major). The modification of the dominant layer is coherent with yet another of Kaphan's views: "Any group or activity associated with the goals of the new value may well become symbols of both goal and value. The meaning of these symbols can be transferred to any musics with which they are closely linked, so that the music itself becomes the symbol for the new value."[4] As such, Ponce's support of the *Mestizo* rise in Mexican society can be seen as an attempt to institutionalize it and promote it as the new direction in which the country should be headed, both musically and socially.

One final question remains in regard to the viability of the *Concierto Romántico*'s sociological interpretation conducted in Chapter 6. An argument could be made that, despite the evidence offered to substantiate the musical and social claims of that

[2] Kaphan, 103.
[3] Ibid., 82.
[4] Ibid., 9.

interpretation, there is no absolute proof that Ponce ever conceived his work in such a manner, or designed it to have extra-musical meaning. In that regard, Kaphan's arguments once again serve as a basis to corroborate the likelihood of such interpretive contentions: "a piece of music may acquire meaning that was never intended or envisioned by its composer. Conversely, social meaning intended by a composer may be later detached from his composition. Therefore definitive proof of a composer's intentions may not in itself be enough to create or abolish musical meaning."[5]

The *Concierto Romántico* is a revolutionary work that set the basis for significant new developments of musical nationalism in Mexico. It can be seen as Ponce's unrecognized transitional attempt to connect two opposing stages of Mexican music. It further initiated a synthesis of Mexican musical elements that resulted in later compositional tendencies like Carlos Chávez' *Modernist Indigenism* and Silvestre Revueltas' *Mestizo Realism*. Its creation truly accounted for a renewed phase in the history of Mexican music.

[5] Ibid., 60.

APPENDIX A

DISCOGRAPHY OF THE *CONCIERTO ROMÁNTICO*

APPENDIX A

DISCOGRAPHY OF THE *CONCIERTO ROMÁNTICO*[1]

1976 Orquesta Filarmónica de la UNAM [UNAM Philharmonic Orchestra], conducted by Eduardo Mata.
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México [National Autonomous University of Mexico], Voz Viva de México, s.n.c., [1976]. 1 Disc: 33 1/3 RPM (LPZ) (Música Nueva, 14)
Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948)
Concierto para piano y orquesta (Concerto for piano and orchestra), Maria Teresa Rodriguez, piano.

1980 Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México [Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra], conducted by Fernando Lozano.
México: AC-FONAPAS, CE 10012, 1980. 1 Disc: 33 1/3 RPM (LPZ)
Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948)
Concierto para piano y orquesta (Concerto for piano and orchestra), Guadalupe Parrondo, piano.

1989 Orquesta Sinfónica del Instituto Politécnico Nacional [Nacional Polytechnic Institute Symphony Orchestra], conducted by Salvador Carballeda.
México: Selections from Reader's Digest, 1989.
Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948)
Concierto para piano y orquesta (Concerto for piano and orchestra), Héctor Rojas, piano.

1994 Camerata de la Filarmónica de Querétaro [Camerata of the Querétaro Philharmonic], conducted by Sergio Cárdenas.
México: Ayuntamiento de Querétaro- Filarmónica de Querétaro, FQ'4, 1994.
1 Compact Disc: DDD.
Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948)
Concierto romántico para piano y cuerdas (Concerto romántico for Piano and Strings). Transcription by Sergio Cárdenas.
Guadalupe Parrondo, piano

[1] Compiled from Eduardo Contreras Soto's "Fonografia de Manuel M. Ponce" in *Heterofonía 118-119*, December 1998, and Jorge Barrón Corvera's *Manuel M. Ponce: a Bio-Bibliography*.

1995 Orquesta Sinfónica del Estado de México [State of Mexico Symphony Orchestra], conducted by Enrique Bátiz.
Great Britain: Academy Sound and Vision, CD DCA 926, 1995.
1 Compact Disc: DDD.
Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948)
Piano Concerto,
Jorge Federico Osorio, piano.

1996 Orquesta Sinfónica del Estado de México [State of Mexico Symphony Orchestra], conducted by Enrique Batiz.
Great Britain: Academy Sound and Vision, CD DCA 952, 1996.
1 Compact Disc: DDD.
Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948)
Piano Concerto,
Jorge Federico Osorio, piano.

2001 Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México [Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra], conducted by Carlos Miguel Prieto.
Sony México, CDEC505513, 1996. 1 Compact Disc: DDD.
Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948).
Concierto para piano y orquesta (Concerto for piano and orchestra),
Héctor Rojas, piano.

APPENDIX B

CLARIFICATION OF PITCH AND RHYTHMIC INACCURACIES IN THE *CONCIERTO ROMÁNTICO*'S PRINTED EDITION

APPENDIX B

CLARIFICATION OF PITCH AND RHYTHMIC INACCURACIES IN THE *CONCIERTO ROMÁNTICO*'S PRINTED EDITION

"Allegro Appassionato"

m. 61: The lower voice in the piano's right hand part should have E-naturals, not F-naturals.

m. 107: The second beat of the piano part should contain a G-sharp, not a G-natural.

m. 184: The tremolo in the half-note in beats three-four is missing in the viola part.

"Andantino Amoroso"

m. 35: The last beat of the piano's right hand part should be a regular triplet, not a dotted eighth-note, sixteenth-note, eighth note triplet.

"Allegretto"

m. 80: Carlos Vázquez mentions that in his recording, Ponce closes the piano's phrase with a C-Sharp and an E in the first beat of right hand in this measure.

"Allegro come prima"

m. 107: Beats two-four in the second bassoon should have E-naturals, not C-Sharps.

m.115-118: The timpani part, playing a C-Sharp eighth note, followed by a two and a half-beat trill, is missing in each of those measures.

m. 132: The third beat of the piano's right hand part should contain G-Sharps. The last note of the triplet has a G-natural, which is incorrect.

m. 146: The second beat in the piano part should contain a C-natural, not a C-Sharp.

m. 156: The piano's left hand downbeat should be an octave D, not an octave F-Sharp.

"Cadenza"

m. 189: The first note in the second beat of the piano's right hand part should be a B, not a D.

"Allegro"

m. 17: The second bassoon should have a G-Sharp, not an F-Sharp. The three repeated eighth notes in the piano's left hand part should also be G-Sharps, not F-Sharps.

mm. 30 and 275: The second beat in the piano's right hand part should have a dotted eighth-sixteenth note rhythm, not two eighth notes.

m. 115: The downbeat in the bassoons' part should have an octave D, not an octave F-Sharp.

m. 118: The downbeat in the piano's left hand part should have an F-Sharp, not an F-natural.

m. 156: The 8va (higher octave) sign is missing in the second beat of the piano's right hand part.

m. 193: The last note in the piano's right hand part should be an E-Flat, not a D-Flat.

m. 211: The lower voice in the downbeat of the piano's right hand part should have an E-Sharp, not a D-Sharp.

m. 262: The same problem as m.17, although the bassoon part is correct in this measure.

m. 298: The eighth-notes in the viola part should have the pitches D-Sharp, E, and C-Sharp, not E-Sharp, F-Sharp, and C-Sharp.

m. 300: The bassoons' part should have three octaves with pitches C-Sharp, C-Sharp, and D, instead of the thirds C-Sharp-E, C-Sharp-E, D-F-natural.

m. 308: The downbeat chord in the piano's right hand part should contain a C-Sharp, not a C-natural.

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